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Evidences of Christianity

LONSDALE RAGG

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Oxford Church Text Books

Evidences of Christianity

BY

THE REV. LONSDALE RAGG, M.A.

PREBENDARY AND VICE-CHANCELLOR OF LINCOLN CATHEDRAL:
SOMETIME WARDEN OF BISHOP'S HOSTEL, LINCOLN

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TO MY FATHER

THOMAS RAGG

WHO STROVE TO PROCLAIM

TO HIS OWN GENERATION

'CREATION'S TESTIMONY

TO ITS GOD'

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NOTE: *The Author's indebtedness to many of these works will be readily seen if the detailed references, given on pp.* 148-150, *be read, as is intended, in connection with the corresponding chapters of this book.*

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EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY

INTRODUCTION

(*a*) SCOPE OF THE INQUIRY

Evidences of Christianity.—It is not easy to define exactly what we mean by 'Evidences of Christianity.' Summarily perhaps we may say that we mean *those matters which lie at the foundation of our belief.*

The Central Evidences.—The chief evidences of Christianity will always centre in the earthly life and character and claims of its Founder. Christ did not, however, as we shall see further on (see p. 76), promulgate an entirely novel set of doctrines, but built upon the foundations of religion that were already laid in the conscience and reason of mankind, and more especially the fundamental doctrine of the Old Testament.

Evidences in the wider sense.—And so the student of Christian Evidences is justified in including within the scope of his inquiry those elementary ideas of God and religion which, though not distinctive of Christianity, are its groundwork.

In taking this wider sweep he is enabled to meet the arguments of different classes of assailants. There are those who profess belief in a God while denying in whole or in part the truth of the Christian revelation. There are also opponents with whom he seems to have less in common. Besides the *Atheist,* who utterly denies the existence of a God, there is the *Agnostic,* who grudgingly admits the possibility of a God, but asserts that if He does exist He cannot possibly be known.

(*b*) POINT OF VIEW ADOPTED

The Standpoint of the Church. — On behalf of the Agnostic and the Atheist it is often too hastily assumed that the Christian Belief is irrational, that it is contradicted by science, and that as knowledge increases, the Christian view of the world in detail is shown more and more to be untenable. It will be our endeavour to show that while partial and inadequate presentations of Christianity may have laid themselves open to such an accusation, the real historic system of Christianity does not so. Individual exponents of Christianity have failed again and again in this particular; whole branches of the Church have now and again ranged themselves temporarily against what turned out after all to be the truth; human sin and wilfulness, and their result, the disunion of Christendom, have introduced disturbance and obscurity, and so confused the issues. But all this does not prove that Christianity itself, looked at as a whole, is wrong or is contrary to reason.

What we claim, and hope to make clear in the sequel, is that if Christian writers and thinkers have shown themselves opposed to the advance of knowledge, it is just because their views of their own religion have been inadequate; and that the opposition so often spoken of between 'Science and Religion,' where it is not due to bad science, is due to bad theology. The full Catholic faith—historic Christianity—will be found to be more comprehensive and more reasonable than the tenets of any sect.

The Claim of Christianity.—We claim that in the Christian Faith as it has been handed down by the one Catholic and Apostolic Church—the faith founded on the facts related in the Bible and sketched in outline in the Creeds—there is nothing contrary to the truths which Reason discovers from time to time in her investigation of the world around us. We claim, not that the Faith itself embraces the details of all knowledge, but that its revelations are not inconsistent with the details discovered, *e.g.* by Natural Science, and that, rightly and fully understood, it will help at least to supply the key

to a true understanding of the universe. This is a vast claim to make: but nothing less would fit a religion to be the final religion of mankind. If it be not true of Christianity, then Christianity is not, what we believe it to be, the ultimate religion of the human race.

In making this claim we do not forget the necessity of 'meekness and fear' (1 Pet. iii. 15), remembering how often sincere champions of the Faith have by a partial presentment of it, or a misunderstanding of its opponents, brought discredit on their own convictions, and created discord where there was no need.

Misrepresentations of Christianity.—It is indeed most important to notice the fatal results that follow from any misrepresentation of the facts of Revelation. Such misrepresentations may be for convenience divided into three classes:—

I. The statement of religious truth that seriously lacks **proportion**, emphasising some one or more sides of it at the expense of the rest. As if, *e.g.*, a man were to be so much impressed with the importance of the Incarnation as such that he failed to do justice to the Atonement and all connected with it; or were so much overborne by the idea of Divine Predestination as to make Free-will a practical nonentity.

II. The statement that is **Defective**, entirely overlooking some essential points of the faith. As if one were, *e.g.*, to think only of the personal relation of the individual soul to its Saviour, and leave out, or practically ignore, the doctrine of the Church—or *vice versa*.

III. The statement that is directly **False**—usually an extreme form of the first or second class—when some essential doctrine of the faith, like the Divinity of our Lord, or of the Holy Spirit, is absolutely denied, or so perverted that the perversion amounts to a denial. Of this character are most of the great heresies which in early ages distracted the Church.

Results of misrepresentation.—It is perhaps not too much to say that a large proportion of the Agnosticism and unbelief of our day is due to the fact that the un-

believers have never really known the Christian system; only some caricature of it. As children they never had the whole faith handed on to them in its rational proportion, but only in some depraved and distorted form, giving unworthy or inadequate views of God, human nature, the Church, and the means of grace. In such a form religion might be accepted at first on authority, but as soon as reason asserted herself it was found to be entirely unsatisfying. Reason and conscience alike revolt against it, and thus Religion, which should be man's prop and stay from the cradle to the grave, comes to be regarded only too often as all very well for women and children, but a thing that you cease to need as you come to years of discretion.

On the other hand, as one well versed in both natural science and theology has asserted (Aubrey Moore, *Science and the Faith*, p. xxii), the doctrine of the Catholic Church is 'not merely as defensible as any other religious position, but it is more rational than all,' and indeed supplies the only religious system at once rational enough and elastic enough to be capable of absorbing all fresh items of truth that are ever pouring from time to time into the treasure house of the knowledge of mankind.

So much then for our standpoint. Let us now pass on to consider in succession the two parts of Christian Evidences taken in the wider sense: I. Evidence for the existence of a God at all. II. Evidence that God is, in Himself and in His relation towards His creatures, what Christianity makes Him out to be. This latter may be conveniently subdivided in such a way as to give us a threefold division corresponding to the grouping of the Articles in the Christian Creed:—

I. God.
II. Jesus Christ.
III. The Holy Spirit and the Church.

PART I: GOD

CHAPTER I

BELIEF IN GOD

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I. Natural Religion :—

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I. *Natural Religion*

A. Evidence of Personal Experience.—Before we attempt to consider the so-called 'proofs' of the existence of a Deity which belong to 'Natural Religion,' we ought to point out that there is one type of evidence which, if it be accepted, surpasses all others in directness and in

conviction. That is, the evidence of personal experience, of the individual human spirit. The purest and highest forms both of religion and of philosophy have conceived of the Deity as a *personal and spiritual* Being. And if that be so, if God be in some real if mysterious sense 'a Person,' able to enter into personal relations with man, then the personal and individual knowledge of Him is bound to be the truest and most convincing. Now it is a fact that thousands of the best of mankind in past ages have testified unmistakably to their belief in such a God, and to a personal relation with Him, which they regarded as the most real and valuable of all that belonged to their life. And this personal conviction is a reality also to-day.

Subjective Testimony to Knowledge of God.—Many of us in this age can bear similar testimony. If questioned even in our least exalted moments, we should be able to say quite honestly that we know that there is a God *because we know Him*; very imperfectly, no doubt, yet with a knowledge that is at least every bit as real to us as our knowledge of anything else.

Our experience of Him—in prayer, and sacrament, and meditation—is as real and as convincing to ourselves as the experience about the external world supplied to us through eye, and hand, and mouth. We might almost venture to adopt S. John's words in his First Epistle, and say, 'That which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled of the Word of life . . . declare we unto you.' And we should be able to add our conviction that all that we ourselves and those who know us recognise as best and highest in us is intimately connected with these experiences.

This evidence 'objectively' expressed in History.—It may be objected that this is all 'subjective,' and may be the effect of illusion, self-deception, or the like. But surely evidence that is 'subjective' when it comes in the shape of a single individual's experience has an objective value if a vast number of cases can be adduced. Those who would treat religion as an illusion—'a disease of the brain'—ignore the fact that it is not just one here and there who has claimed this experience; and the pheno-

menon is not confined to a single age. The history of the Christian Church—making all possible allowance for exaggeration and for a legendary element in the records—shows a vast collection of cases in which men, women, and children of different ages, climes, races, and conditions of life have borne witness to their unconquerable belief in God as a Person with whom they have had intercourse. And in a large number of instances, they have been ready to suffer loss, torture, and death for the sake of such communion. It meant to them more than all else in the world.

Thus the evidence afforded by the lives of saints and martyrs—and such are with us still—has a value and a force which no scientific inquirer can afford to disregard.

Yet the evidence of 'personal communion,' even when thus objectively expressed in history, is apt to be regarded with prejudice by many people. They are not conscious of having ever felt a similar experience themselves; or perhaps from a long disuse of the religious faculties they have come to regard such experience as unreal.

And so this argument, which is in itself the most convincing of all to those who can appreciate it, needs to be backed by considerations which will be likely to obtain a more general recognition.

Course of the following Argument.—Such considerations are to be found partly in what is called 'Natural Religion,' partly in the Christian Revelation. If we can ground our argument (1) on an appeal to the principles of human nature and then (2) on an appeal to history, we may hope for better success.

(1) *Natural Religion.*—This phrase has been variously employed. In the eighteenth century, when many of the arguments which we shall shortly discuss came into special prominence, 'Natural Religion' meant an artificial abstraction something like the modern monstrosity of 'Undenominationalism,' an attempt to work back to a primitive conception of religion by taking away all those elements that seemed distinctive of Christianity.

As we shall use it, it will be applied rather to those evidences which seem to show that man from his very

constitution is essentially and naturally a *religious* being. We shall endeavour in our earlier chapters to show that human nature itself seems to imply, and, as it were, *demand* a God, and that the glimmerings of divine truth to be obtained from this 'Natural Religion' lead up to the idea of a more direct and certain Revelation.

(2) *Historic Christianity.*—In the later chapters (chiefly Parts II. and III. of the book) we shall make our appeal to history. We shall take historic Christianity as a religion claiming to supply this undoubted demand of human nature, and consider how far, on its own merits, and in comparison with other claimants, it fulfils the necessary conditions, in intrinsic worth, in historical attestation, and in the results which it has produced among men.

Limitations of the Argument.—It is important to observe at the outset, that if Christianity be true, it will be impossible to find a *demonstrative proof* of the existence of God. There are at least two reasons why this should be so. The first lies in the nature of religion, and the second in the nature of the Deity.

(1) *Necessity of Faith.*—It is one of the characteristic doctrines of Christianity that *faith* is necessary in order to attain to the highest religious truth. In demanding faith, Christianity demands not a contradiction of reason, but a reaching out beyond what demonstrative proof can give us. (Religious belief must not be confused with *intellectual* belief or 'opinion.' In the latter case the evidence is too deficient in strength or in quantity to justify conviction; in the former it produces conviction, but is not of the kind that is amenable to demonstration.) But if faith is one of the essentials of religion, we shall expect that in each stage of the argument there will be a loophole for escape; the evidence will be at most all but conclusive, never such as to *compel* belief like a demonstration in geometry.

(2) *Nature of the Subject.*—The central subject of religion is God, and God, if the Christian theory be true, underlies the existence of all things else. If He exists, it is in Him that 'we live and move and have our being': He is the 'Master-light of all our seeing,' the very atmo-

sphere of our life, and the background, as well as the spring, of all our thinking. And so to *prove* strictly and by demonstration the existence of God would be even harder than the proving of our own existence, which we do not in the least doubt because we cannot prove it.

Having thus suggested what may reasonably be expected where the existence of the Deity is made the subject of argument, we may proceed to pass in review the traditional 'arguments' of 'Natural Religion.'

Some knowledge of God possible apart from 'Revelation.' —That something can be known of God apart from what we call 'direct revelation' is a principle laid down by S. Paul, who (Rom. i. 20) speaks of the 'eternal power and Godhead' of the Deity as manifested even to heathen minds through the visible creation. And human nature in general, represented by all races and in all ages, bears similar witness. Religion is a practically universal phenomenon in the human race. This is the substance of the argument based on the 'general consent of mankind.'

B. **The Traditional Arguments.**—From ancient times those who have tried to explain the grounds of this 'general consent' have elaborated different lines of argument based on different aspects of the external world or of human nature, all of them leading up to the conviction of belief in a God, and each adding some fresh contribution to the fulness of the idea. Thus one of the arguments is based on the consideration of the external world in its broad, structural principles. Every effect implies a cause. Such an orderly and systematic grouping of forces as the physical world exhibits, points to a cause of a very special character; and the mind will not be content to rest in what is called a 'secondary cause,' *i.e.* a cause which is itself the effect of something else further back. We can have no final resting-place for thought save in a first cause—a cause, that is, which is uncaused by anything prior to itself—is, in fact, self-caused. The universe, broadly considered, demands a *first cause.* This argument is called the **Aetiological** (*i.e.* 'cause argument') or **Cosmological** (*i.e.* universe argu-

ment). Something of vastness and of orderly principle and intelligence in this First Cause is brought out by the Cosmological argument itself. But further characteristics emerge from the consideration of nature in detail, which is the work of that most ancient and popular of the so-called 'proofs' of the existence of God—the **Design-argument** also called the **Teleological** argument. The First Cause is known to be *intelligent* and *free* by the manifest traces of intelligent purposes in the world.

A more difficult line of thought is reached in the argument called **Ontological**, which in a sense lies behind the two just spoken of. If it be asked, How can man think or argue at all from external nature? How can we account for this meeting of thought and things? The Ontological argument finds in God the answer, There is thought in things. Man's mind, with which he thinks, and the external world, of which he thinks, both exist 'in God,' who is the absolute existence and the universal mind; at once the most perfect conceivable object of thought and the ground of thought itself.

In this Ontological argument the scene has changed from the consideration of external nature to that of the relation between man's intelligence and things 'external.' The **Moral Argument** or argument from conscience carries us from the intellectual to the ethical sphere, and here it is himself in his own moral nature that man contemplates, and finds therein—in the phenomena of *conscience*—a strong argument for the existence of an eternal and universal Lawgiver, at once inside and outside of himself.

To these arguments is sometimes added another, viz., the **Argument from History**, which is akin both to the moral and to the design-argument. Human history, broadly considered, seems to involve a purpose and design more extensive than the lives or schemes of those who play its parts. And that strain of purpose exhibits manifest tokens—in spite of much that is confused and perplexing—of a moral governance, of a 'Power that makes for righteousness.'

These Arguments not strictly 'Proofs.'—These are the so-called 'five proofs' of the existence of God: (1) The

argument from *the general consent* of mankind—often called by its Latin name '*Argumentum e consensu gentium*'; (2) The *Cosmological* or Cause-argument; (3) The *Teleological* or Design-argument; (4) The *Ontological* or Thought-argument; (5) The *Ethical, Moral,* or Conscience-argument; to which is sometimes added (6) The argument from *History.*

They are not really *proofs* in any strict sense of the word; it is better to call them more modestly '*arguments.*' None of them, taken separately, is sufficient to convince every type of intelligent thinker, though individual thinkers, and those among the greater philosophers of the world, have found in this or that one, adequate ground for conviction. The force of the whole group of arguments taken together—*i.e.* their 'cumulative force'—is very considerable indeed, especially when corroborated by the study of the broad facts of human history, though, as we shall see later on, it fails to be perfectly satisfying and convincing; as indeed we were led to expect from the outset (p. 8). We will now glance at these arguments in detail.

Relation of 'General Consent' Argument to the Others. The first thing to observe is this, that the argument, '*e consensu gentium,*' is not really to be classed with the other four. The fact that the religious instinct appears as an universal phenomenon in human nature does not *prove* the existence of a God. But it suggests that it will be worth while to study the various aspects of human nature in itself and in its relation to the world, and find out whether it exhibits reasons for this religious instinct. So this argument becomes as it were the starting-point of the other four.

Antiquity and Nature of this Argument.—The argument itself is a very old one—as old as Plato and Cicero and Seneca, and no doubt older still. As soon as philosophers began to observe mankind in a general way, comparing and contrasting the characteristics of different peoples whether civilised or savage, they would be at once confronted by this significant fact, that however widely the various tribes differed from one another in other ways, they were all alike in exhibiting traces of a

belief in a God or Gods—and from this it was natural to infer that man is by nature a 'religious animal.'

This argument has often been crudely stated, as though it meant that every individual born into the world has a full-grown idea of Deity born in him—an 'innate idea of God.' Again, it has been held to prove at once that God exists: a conclusion unwarrantable, in its absolute form. But in spite of all that has been urged against it, the argument, if carefully stated, retains its proper value as 'an evidence that there are evidences.'

Relation of the Argument to that from Individual Spiritual Experience.—We said above that if there be a God, a *personal* God, the clearest and most direct evidence of His existence will be that of man's personal spirit (p. 6). Now this general consent of mankind is surely just that argument, in a rudimentary form, 'writ large' on the face of the human race. It can hardly be an accident that has given to mankind so universally, in such diverse conditions and ages, the religious instinct: the feeling after a supernatural world and the desire for communion therewith that has expressed itself in thousands of different ways, many of them strangely depraved and grotesque, but all having a deep earnestness at the back of them. We naturally put it down to something in the constitution of man as man—and the further quest involved in the four arguments justifies us in so doing. It is surely, in a wider and much more rudimentary form, the same evidence of man's personal spirit which we found manifested in Church history, in the lives of the saints and martyrs, and recognised also as the outcome of our own imperfect spiritual life.

Objections to the Argument.—There are two obvious objections to this argument which may be briefly dismissed: (1) the *diversity* of beliefs; (2) the existence of *Atheism*.

(1) *Diversity of Beliefs.*—How can you speak, it may be said, of a 'general consent of mankind'? Putting aside for the moment the profession of Atheism by individuals both now and in past centuries, and the alleged existence of purely atheistic tribes, what is it

that has won mankind's consent and agreement? The so-called religious beliefs, if compared, will be found often mutuallyexclusive and contradictory. Some have believed in one God, some in many, some practically in evil spirits alone, and with some apparently the spirit-world is only inhabited by the ghosts of their ancestors. Again, the representations of the supernatural powers have been most diverse, and in the majority of cases puerile and grotesque. A stone, a tree, an irrational animal have been made the centre of worship and the object of propitiatory rites. Higher in the scale come the cults of the great objects and forces of the natural world—the mystery of the rivers and forest glades, the wind and rain, the germinating power of the harvest, the sun moon and stars of heaven. What have these, it may be asked, in common with one another? What have they in common with the more spiritual and philosophic conceptions characteristic of the Semitic race, and represented now by Islam, Judaism, Christianity?

This objection derives much of its force from a misapprehension of the meaning of the phrase '*consensus*,' as though it implied a conscious and deliberate adoption by each of the individuals or of the tribes of mankind; and an adoption of certain cut-and-dried theological ideas.

Nothing of this kind is intended, at least by modern exponents of the argument. Rather this: that from what we can learn there has been exhibited in all ages and in all races a sort of religious instinct. This instinct implies a want—a need—and the universal need which it implies is that of communion with the supernatural. The fact that the instinct expresses itself in such strikingly various ways only emphasises by contrast the fundamental identity of the need. We would not contend that there has been any 'general agreement' as to a developed form of religion; but the facts seem to justify us in asserting that the rudimentary instinct of religion is to all intents and purposes universal. If this be so, it will be worth while to advance a step further, and see if we can find in the constitution of human nature grounds for this instinct. That is the purpose

of the formal arguments, cosmological, teleological, and the like. But first we must meet one other objection.

(2) The *existence of Atheism.*—This cannot be denied. There have been in the past thinkers of considerable power, Leucippus and Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius among the ancients, and many perhaps less illustrious moderns, have professed to believe that there is no God. With Atheism we shall deal more fully later on (see p. 38 *sqq.*); but here it may be sufficient to point out that the existence of individual exceptions here and there does not really invalidate the argument, which involves not a 'counting of heads,' but a consideration of the broad facts of humanity in general. The dogmatic profession of Atheism has usually been found in surroundings of a complex and artificial civilisation, and may well be a by-product of it. If so, little can be based on such exceptional instances, when the argument is concerned with human nature as such.

It has been alleged, however (though it has been as strenuously denied), that whole tribes of savages have been found, having not the most rudimentary trace of a religious instinct. We believe that intelligent missionaries brought into contact with such tribes would by making conversions soon prove such allegations false. But even supposing that such were the case, it would not necessarily avail to outweigh the great mass of evidence on the other side. For it must be remembered that the modern savage can in no way claim to represent 'primitive man,' *i.e.* normal undeveloped man. For primitive man, as has been well said, had in him the germs of all the progressive peoples of to-day. There is such a thing as degradation, and a race that has failed during all the centuries of history to mount the first rung of the ladder of civilisation, is morally certain to have fallen back from its normal undeveloped condition.

Summary: the Value of the Argument from 'General Consent.'—We may perhaps be justified, then, in claiming for this time-honoured argument, not indeed the force of a demonstrative proof of God's existence, but at least the value of a preliminary evidence. It most strongly suggests that man's mental and moral constitution 'is

such, that in face of the facts of nature and life religion naturally arises.' And so it impels us to look further, and to see if Nature and human nature do not afford traces which may help us to discover the reason and justification for this universal phenomenon of Religion.

Cosmological or Aetiological Argument.—And the first line of argument that meets us is that which works upon the elementary idea of causality. 'Cause and effect' seem to be among our most primary and ineradicable notions. How we come to have them is another question, but they certainly form an essential part of the mental furniture of human nature as we know it. We know ourselves to be—by the force of our will—causes capable of producing effects, and we see, or think we see, a similar process going on in Nature outside us. How otherwise are we to explain the presence of 'Energy' in the universe? Everything that we experience we are obliged to attribute to some cause; and when we investigate the nature and origin of that cause, we find it to be itself the effect of some previous cause. And this process bids fair to go on indefinitely, because there is nothing in external Nature capable of being a cause to itself. Even we ourselves, though we feel ourselves, in virtue of free-will, to be on a higher level of causality than the 'things' in Nature, know that we are not self-caused. But the mind cannot rest in such infinite vagueness as Nature seems to present to us. We cannot stop short of the idea of a First Cause, a cause that is cause of everything else, and is not the effect of anything outside itself. In arriving at this first cause, we have reached one aspect of Deity. And it is not a barren, abstract, and mechanical cause that we have reached, but one which the barest outlines of the orderly universe proclaim to be a principle of law and order and intelligence; and one also which because it finds its nearest though imperfect analogue in our personality—the truest cause we know of by experience—may therefore be presumed to possess at least some of the characteristic attributes of personality.

Design-argument.—If the notion of a First Cause emerges from the consideration of the fact of the universe and its

parts as effects; a closer consideration of Nature in detail brings out aspects of that First Cause which can only be adequately expressed in terms which we apply to ourselves as rational and personal beings—will, intelligence, purpose—combined with a power of giving effect to those attributes that can only be described as infinite or at least utterly beyond our comprehension; while, in spite of the problems of pain and evil, which interfere with the simple and straightforward interpretation of the phenomena, there are very strong indications of a beneficence and moral force directing the will and guiding the purpose of the great first cause.

Its relation to modern problems: Evolution.—This argument will need a little fuller consideration than the former one, because it is in this sphere that theology comes into closer contact with the Evolution theory and the more prominent recent developments of natural science. The idea of Evolution, broadly considered, seems all on the side of the argument, for the evolution theory like the Design-argument seems to favour a teleological view of Nature, *i.e.* the view that the process of Nature exhibits a *purpose*. By evolution is meant the gradual unfolding of a developed and mature object from the germ or seed. It is maintained that all the varied and diverse forms of life and structure which now find a common home in the world are the results of a gradual development, having their ultimate origin in a single cell, or in at least some elementary and simple and single form of life. This process of development by which organisms become gradually more complex and elaborate in their constitution, and by which diverse organisms branch off, as it were, from a single and simpler parent-stock, can be traced with certainty in different regions and portions, and the evolution-doctrine presumes that a complete knowledge would be able to trace it universally.

Now the theory so far is not really antagonistic to the Design-argument. It only seems to offer a *description of the process* by which has been actually carried out the great design or purpose which men have been forced to infer from the harmonious interaction of Nature's

bewilderingly numerous and complicated denizens and forces.

But there are certain subsidiary ideas connected with evolution which do at first sight seem to cut the ground away from the Design-argument. And indeed the evolution-idea itself contradicts an old and crude form of the argument, which regarded each natural object and species of objects as separately created in its fully-developed form. This belongs to the old mechanical way of viewing the universe, not as a living organism, but as a dead machine, and we may thankfully give up all of the argument that needs to be resigned on that ground.

The real point of conflict: 'Struggle for Existence.'—But modern science seems to teach us that one of the great features of the process of evolution by which Nature grew up into her present comeliness has been the *struggle for existence* and *survival of the fittest*. It has not been a simple advance, a peaceful procession, a complete and all-embracing development from lower to higher. The present state of things has been achieved by a constant, fierce, and mortal struggle. Countless types of life, animal and vegetable, have come into being only to perish utterly because unfitted to survive and leave a posterity. They have been cast aside as waste products. And the surviving forms of organic life are but a tiny minority compared with the innumerable mistakes and misfits which lie buried in Nature's rubbish-heap.

It cannot be denied that there is much to support this view, in the phenomena of biology when studied in the light of geology. Nor can it be denied that this doctrine of struggle most profoundly affects the statement of the Design-argument.

Any one who in face of it could use the bland language of the Deists who saw in Nature no difficulties at all, only clear evidence of wisdom and beneficence, would deserve the reproach which Job cast upon his friends, of being unfair champions of God, and such as He would not own.

The real teaching of Evolution.—But surely the struggle for existence, with all its attendant troubles and diffi-

culties, does not do away with the necessity for an intelligent purpose at the back of Nature. Indeed it makes the harmony and beauty of the result in some ways more striking than ever, and suggests a power of bringing good out of evil and order out of chaos, such as would not be implied in a mere straightforward development that should have in it no element of struggle. What the evolutionist doctrines teach us about the Design-argument is surely something of this sort:

(1) That the evidence for a designing intelligence to be inferred from the marvellous interaction and harmony of the phenomena of the world as we know them is not quite so simple a matter as used to be supposed. (2) That though minute and detailed instances of adaptation, rightly considered, have still force as evidence, the stress of the argument must be laid more on the broad general results than on the consideration of isolated objects, as though they were each created independently in its fully developed form. If these two cautions are borne in mind, evolution itself will be found, as we hinted above, to be a champion of teleology. For the whole complicated universe of to-day, with its marvellous correlation of forces and its multitudinous array of organisms must have existed already in germ in that from which it was evolved; and the existence of that germ, destined to develop so, demands an intelligence if possible greater than that which would be needed to create a full-grown world as it is to-day.

The **Ontological Argument** is the one which appeals least widely; it requires some metaphysical training to appreciate it thoroughly; its place in the series has been indicated above (p. 10). It has several forms. One of these is akin to the cosmological: it works back from the imperfect to the perfect, from the relative to the absolute. With S. Anselm it takes the form, '*That must exist than which no greater can be conceived.*' The very idea of God proves His necessary existence. A non-existent God would be less perfect than one who should exist. Therefore God, unless He exist, is not the highest conceivable being. The very idea of God as the most perfect conceivable being

involves His necessary existence. Yet another form of the argument, which also appears in S. Anselm, is that to which we referred above (p. 10). It amounts to this, that the existence of God is not merely involved in my idea of Him but also necessary to the validity of my thought at all. If there is anything real corresponding to my thought, it must be because thought and reality meet somewhere; and this meeting-point is found in the highest of all realities, the universal thought or mind. S. Anselm's argument is based upon that belief without which all our reasonings upon Nature would be futile, viz., 'that a condition which is absolutely necessary in order that thought may be valid is necessary to the existence of the world.' Conscious intelligence in man leads him to look for something analogous as the basis at once of the external world and of his own thought. This basis of both thought and things will be from one point of view the Absolute Existence, from another the Universal Consciousness.

The **Argument from Conscience** (called also the *moral* or *ethico-theological* argument) is much more easily comprehensible: and is perhaps the argument of the greatest weight. It has rivalled the Design-argument in general popularity, and Immanuel Kant, who rejected all the other formal arguments as invalid, was prepared to lay the whole burden of proof upon this. Concisely put, it is as follows:—

The phenomena of conscience are of such a kind as to suggest the existence of a perfect moral Being independent of ourselves, to whom conscience holds itself responsible.

It is not easy to define conscience, but we all know of its existence, and have experienced its effects—we know that through conscience we apprehend the right and wrong in actions. We possess as an integral part of our nature (and a part which we recognise as among the very highest) a sense of moral responsibility—a belief that we *ought* to do this or that irrespective of our *wish* at the moment, and quite regardless of our immediate advantage Whence comes this *ought*, this authoritative character of conscience? Obviously

not from our own pleasure or liking; equally obviously not from the will of the community, for conscience often impels men to act quite contrary to the public opinion of their time. Kant, and many others with him, have held that its only explanation is to be found in the existence of a supreme, universal, and perfect Lawgiver and Judge, who is the author of conscience and to whom conscience feels itself responsible.

Objections to this Argument.—The argument from conscience, like the Design-argument, has found an apparent foe in modern science. But here again we believe the opposition to be more apparent than real.

(1) Sometimes an endeavour is made to explain away conscience, on the ground that its dictates to different people in different ages and surroundings are so contradictory. One man's conscience forbids what another man's approves, and *vice versa*. Thus, to take an extreme instance, the conscience of most civilised peoples forbids murder; but the Dyak's conscience, we are told, 'urges him to make as large a collection of skulls as possible to grace his front door!' To admit this is not to deny the existence of conscience as a factor, and a prominent factor, in human nature. For first, observation will show that the variations of conscience are not so chaotic and irrational as might at first sight appear. The more we know about it, the more we recognise a constant relation between it and the circumstances of the individual or race concerned. In a low state of civilisation the same race will be impelled by conscience to perform acts which in a higher state it would repudiate as inhuman and immoral. And so indeed it is with individuals, as any may see by looking back upon his own life. But really the bewildering variety of forms in which it manifests itself, only brings out into greater emphasis the constancy of the *feeling of obligation* itself. That is found everywhere, and is everywhere the same, though it is more or less intelligently applied according to the circumstances and attainment of the particular owner of the conscience.

(2) But a further attempt has been made to discredit conscience from the point of view of Evolution. Darwin

showed how the dog and other animals exhibit many of the phenomena which in human beings we ascribe to conscience. And from the existence of this 'rudimentary conscience' in the lower animals, an attempt has been made to explain away the authoritative character of conscience on the ground that it has arisen by a gradual process of evolution from some original sensation or the like, that had no traces of morality or rational intelligence about it.

To this objection we should reply:—

(*a*) That we are concerned with *conscience as it is* in man fully developed, and the character of that conscience is not altered for better or worse by the circumstances of its historical development; and further

(*b*) That whatever might be the original germ of conscience, it was a germ destined to develop into the rational and authoritative conscience with which we are now familiar. There were in it, therefore, implicit if not yet explicit principles of the completest morality and the most authoritative obligation. And so the argument for a supreme Lawgiver and Judge is only carried back from conscience, as we know it now, to its far-off undeveloped original.

Argument from History.—This argument for a Divine Lawgiver is corroborated by that which the study of history affords. The Hebrews were, as we say, an 'inspired' people—they had, to put it less technically, a genius for religion, as the Greeks had for æsthetics and the Romans for law and government. To their eyes the hand of a Supreme Moral Ruler and Judge was as clearly visible in history as it was in Nature and in conscience. This gives their distinctive character to the historical books of the Old Testament. But the Hebrews have not had a monopoly of this insight. Pagan writers like Herodotus and Livy have seen the hand of Heaven at work alike in the disasters and the triumphs of individuals and of peoples; and those who have studied history in the light of the Old Testament models have been able to recognise still more clearly, amid all the confusion, the tracks of 'a Power that makes for righteousness.' The skein of history is far too intricately

entangled for the acutest mind to be able to follow up all its threads in detail, and trace out the intellectual, moral, social, and physical causes of each event that is recorded. But a steady glance at the great outlines of history will show that on the whole there has been a fairly constant relation between national morality and national success—or at any rate that without moral stability and growth a race can never withstand the inevitable attacks of disintegration and ruin: that in general, in spite of the fluctuations and retrogressions consequent on the continual succession of different races to power—the young, sound, and vigorous from time to time supplanting the degenerate and effete—there has been a gradual progress from a lower to a higher standard of morality in the world in general. This has often been brought about by the most unlikely means, and in ways which no single generation of men could have planned. Furthermore, the lives of many of the principal actors in the drama of history afford instances of the working out of moral purposes above and beyond themselves which cannot be ignored, though the widespread existence of apparently unmerited success and failure still offers insoluble problems to pious hearts as it did to the Hebrew Psalmists, and still points to a future life as the scene of a final redress of the balance and vindication of the principles of righteousness and justice.

C. **Estimate of the Value of the Preceding Arguments.**—Each of these arguments has its peculiar value, and each appeals with varying force to different minds.

The average mind would probably find the *Design-argument* most attractive and convincing. It has always been a favourite, since the days of Plato, alike with pagan and with Christian thinkers. The *Cosmological* seems more abstract and remote, but it finds a response in the instinctive feeling we all possess of personal causality resident in ourselves, yet in us not absolute or underived. The *Moral-argument*, regarded by Kant as having a validity lacking in all the rest, shares with the Design-argument a very general acceptance, while it carries us up to a higher region than does the latter.

The *Ontological* is least popular, because its appreciation demands some metaphysical training, yet to S. Augustine it is in some sense the ultimate argument; while S. Anselm's presentation of it—in which it runs very close to the Cosmological-argument—is to him the most satisfactory 'proof' of God's existence.

But we must consider the *cumulative* force of these different lines of argument taken together, not forgetting the support given them by the *consensus gentium*. That their force in combination is considerable, probably none would deny; that it falls short of scientific demonstration was to be expected, as we have seen from the ultimate and primary nature of its subject matter, God. No science—and theology is no exception to the rule—is called upon to demonstrate the truth of its primary principles; every science must start with certain postulates or axioms.

That the total result of man's quest for God in Nature falls short, however, of real certainty and leaves us in some points unsatisfied is, as we shall see in the next section, an argument in favour of a revelation.

If Reason can lead us so far, is there no means of getting further still?

II. *Revelation*

Natural Religion inadequate.—We have seen that the exercise of human reason upon the universe in which man is placed—upon his own nature and upon that which he finds external to himself—leads him up to a certain point, and then fails him.

It leaves him with a more or less clearly defined demand, but it does not satisfy that demand with the kind of certainty that he looks for. It sketches for him, as it were in outline, that which shall satisfy the aspirations of his intellectual, æsthetic, and moral faculties; but, for aught he can attain of certainty by its means, this outline may be that of a beautiful mirage. Natural religion cannot invite him to 'taste and see how gracious the Lord is,' and so prove to himself experimentally that this beautiful vision is no mere mirage.

It will now be our endeavour to show that while man

needs a certainty beyond that which natural reason can attain, the God whom reason suggests (if He exist) could find means to meet man's need by special help; and that there are indeed in the natural world analogies, exhibiting side by side what we may call the helped and unhelped use of our faculties.

A. Further certainty is needed.—We have not far to look if we wish to illustrate the unsatisfactory character of the results of 'Natural Religion.' It will be enough, perhaps, to take just two points; one showing how Natural Religion fails to supply any key to the most perplexing difficulties which face us every day, and a second to suggest how even in its sketch of the Divine character it falls short of the demands of human nature.

(1) *The problem of evil.*—The four arguments, and especially the Design-argument, suggest a God working out with wisdom and power the designs of a great beneficence. The eternity and perfection of these qualities are suggested by the cosmological and ontological arguments, and their moral quality by the argument from conscience.

But how are we to reconcile these conclusions with the fact that the world presents also a huge spectacle of pain, disintegration, decay, struggle, and misery?

Or if we carry the consideration a step further back and say that all these, in so far as they are really evil, are due to the disturbing presence of *moral evil* in the world, how are we to account for moral evil?

If God approves of it, or is indifferent, the moral argument is contradicted; if He disapproves, but does not know how to prevent it, or knowing has not the power, the other arguments are stultified.

We want help, then, beyond what reason acting in the ordinary way can give us, if we are to face the problem of evil.

(2) *Divine Fatherhood.*—If we take, in the sketch of the Divine character drawn by Natural Religion, the single point of *goodness* a like conclusion is reached.

We claim that God's goodness should at least not fall short of that of an earthly father. But the characteristic of the goodness of an earthly parent is that it shows

itself in the highest form of love—*self-sacrifice*. The Moral-argument, backed by the Design-argument, demands that there should be in God something analogous to what we know as self-sacrifice in ourselves. But there is no sign in *Nature* that God's bounty costs Him anything. Indeed it is almost impossible, *à priori*, to put the idea of cost involved in self-sacrifice, in connection with the inexhaustible resourcefulness of the God of the four arguments. Nothing but a direct *revelation* of some kind could prove to us that God's love can actually be self-sacrificing. (See further chap. iii. p. 79.)

B. **Deity could surely find means.**—A God such as Natural Religion suggests—the kind of Being up to which those different and independent lines of reasoning all lead—would necessarily be such that to suppose Him either unwilling or unable to help His rational children would be inconceivable.

Perfect fatherly goodness is an attribute of such a God, though, as we have seen, such goodness ultimately implies a self-sacrifice which it is beyond the power of Natural Religion to justify. The God of Natural Theology is, however, not merely the centre and spring of perfect morality and perfect beneficence, but also the actual author and designer of the highest parental instincts as exhibited amongst His creatures. And perfect fatherly goodness could not leave us in a ruinous perplexity, baffled and bewildered as regards matters of the highest moment. If the Supreme Goodness could so leave us, it must be for lack of the necessary *wisdom* to devise a means or of the *power* to carry it out. But the God of Natural Religion was supreme in both of these qualities.

Still it may be asked, How is it possible to conceive of a method other than that of Natural Religion, by which God could reveal Himself to mankind?

Is not Natural Religion itself a 'revelation'? Can we imagine any other and more direct way, than that the Creator should manifest Himself in His works, and in man's own consciousness and conscience? And if further light be necessary, how can we hope to get it but by the normal progress of science—the gradual accumulation

of knowledge to which each succeeding age adds its contribution?

Such 'further light' as that would surely be a poor consolation to the individuals who need light here and now—who require a greater practical certainty and a more direct guidance, and require it at once!

We are therefore led to ask whether it is after all quite inconceivable that there should be some more direct and certain method of Divine revelation, supplementary to that group of religious ideas so painfully acquired by man in 'Natural Religion.'

C. **Analogies from ordinary life.**—It has been pointed out, and rightly, that there are in our ordinary life phenomena analogous to this 'more direct guidance.' The relations between man and man furnish two special analogies, viz. (i) the relation to the *Child* of the *Parent* and the *Race*, in the matter of the acquisition of knowledge, and (ii) the relation of *Teacher* to *Pupil*. A third (iii) analogy may be drawn from the methods of physical science, viz. that afforded by the relation of *Experiment* to *Observation*.

(i) **Analogy of Parent and Child.**—Every child that is born into the world has two main sources of practical knowledge to guide him in the affairs of life—his own experience and that of others. To the former, of course, he has access directly, to the latter indirectly, by instruction, advice, and example.

The child is not left to find out all this for himself from the very beginning, else we should probably be still in the position of primitive savages. But while on the one hand he advances daily in practical knowledge by dint of the gradual accumulating results of his own direct experience, sometimes pleasurable, sometimes the reverse; on the other hand his parents and those about him are able to accelerate that advance indefinitely by admonitions, hints, and unconscious leadings. These embody the results of their more mature experience, and represent to some extent the age-long experience of the race.

Quaintly typical of this is the admonition given in the Old English *Sarum Manual* (cf. *Prayer Book* in this

series) to godparents after a christening—'We charge you that ye charge the father and mother to keep' this child 'from fire and water and other perils to the age of vii. years.' Indeed we may say that without such extra help and protection—help given too in a way different from his own direct experience, yet in a sense part of that experience, as being filtered through his own consciousness—many a child would undoubtedly perish, and very few ever reach 'years of discretion.'

(ii) **Analogy of Teacher and Pupil.**—In a similar way is the pupil's acquisition of knowledge helped by the teacher. This help, like the practical knowledge spoken of above, must be, in a sense, a genuine part of the pupil's experience, as filtering through his consciousness. The pupil's mind must be at work—must seize, devour, assimilate the matter put before it; but it is not left without guidance and help. How few of us would ever advance far in learning if we had no assistance outside our own reason! Because we must remember that even text-books really represent the living teacher, to a very large extent. What the teacher is able to do, with his wider knowledge and experience, is to *direct* and to *supplement* the normal action of the pupil's reason, keeping him from straying into bypaths and blind alleys; and, while leading him as straight as may be towards the goal, to give him just that touch of reassuring confidence that we feel when we can compare another's results with our own and find them tally.

Application of these Analogies illustrated from the Bible.—It would not be difficult to illustrate the force of these two analogies from the Bible. The Old Testament itself exhibits the way in which God dealt with the Hebrew people as a father teaches children, supplementing those religious ideas which they originally possessed in common with other Semitic races, and directing them further and further as they were able to receive direction. First in the Mosaic Law, with its definite injunctions and prohibitions, warning them off this and that enticing but dangerous path; and then in the more elaborately spiritual, prophetic teaching. 'Line upon line' and 'precept upon precept,' 'in many parts

and many manners'; by the method known as 'progressive revelation.'

Or if we want an illustration from the New Testament of the contrast in the religious sphere between the blundering and wandering of a would-be student without help, and the light and assurance afforded by the Divine tuition of Revelation, we may find it in S. Paul's speech at Athens (Acts xvii.). He is contrasting the depraved form of 'Natural Religion' in vogue in pagan Athens with the religion of the Gospel which he was himself introducing. The former is a superstitious and polytheistic worship of an 'unknown God.' The true instinct that underlies its idolatrous exterior is a blind feeling and groping after the true God with an impulse derived from Him; a state of ignorance pardonable in itself, but in the light of Revelation a thing that needs to be repented of. The latter—the Christian faith—Revelation—is no blind groping of man, but a definite and sufficient assurance given by God, and accompanied by specific demands. And the God who gives this assurance in the miracle of Christ's Resurrection is no longer an 'unknown God,' dimly conceived by poets as Father of all, but the one Creator and Possessor of all things, the Life of all that live, our very Father, and the righteous Judge of the world.

There can be no doubt that Dionysius the Areopagite, and Damaris, and the rest who accepted S. Paul's teaching found for their religious life in Jesus Christ just that help and reassuring confidence, just that direction of their religious instincts and supplementing and correcting of their religious ideas that a good teacher gives to a willing pupil in the sphere of secular instruction.

(iii) **Analogy of Experiment and Observation.**—But there is yet another analogy to the relation between Natural Theology and Revelation which is very valuable. This is to be found in the relation between *Observation* and *Experiment* in the physical sciences. Much can of course be learned through simply watching and observing natural laws at work under the conditions in which we happen to find them in the world. But where experi-

ment has been possible, to supplement observation, science has made a much speedier advance, has attained, often, a greater certainty in its results, and has penetrated into regions before impenetrable. Experiment is the observation of phenomena under artificially arranged conditions. The experimenter is thus able to remove complications and to reduce uncertainties to a minimum—abstracting and isolating just those elements in which he is interested. And so it becomes possible for him in a few minutes, perhaps, to demonstrate what years of patient and careful observation could never prove. Both speed and certainty are indefinitely enhanced.

May not the relation between Natural Religion and Revelation be analogous to this? Natural Theology like observation might be expected in the course of ages to produce considerable results. But a shorter and more direct method of religious instruction of mankind might be able both to hasten indefinitely the advance, to give greater security to its results, and also to push it into regions impenetrable by the other method.

The importance of this last analogy will become clear when we deal with the subject of 'Miracle' (p. 44 *sqq.*). Meanwhile it may be worth while just to refer to the 'experimental' character of the training of the Hebrews. They were a nation indisputably 'isolated' in a conspicuous way, and put into what might be called an 'artificial' religious environment. The great crises of their history, and the strangeness of the phenomena, recorded as attending them, point to a method of dealing with this people which, when compared with the religious history of contemporary nations, is most remarkable. And its results bear out the analogy. By the time when the last book of the Old Testament was admitted into the Canon, they had reached a stage of religious development so far in advance of any other nation that comparison is simply impossible. The least sympathetic student of the Old Testament must needs echo the Psalmist's words—

> 'He hath not dealt so with any nation,
> Neither have the heathen knowledge of His laws.'

CHAPTER II

SUPERNATURAL REVELATION AND ITS ANTAGONISTS

A. SUPERNATURAL REVELATION, pp. 31, 32.

Revelation, led up to by 'Natural Religion,' necessarily involves the 'Supernatural.' This evokes hostility from many quarters : yet the general trend of human thought and practice bears witness to the naturalness of belief in the supernatural.

B. ANTAGONISTS OF SUPERNATURAL REVELATION.

I. INADEQUATE THEISTIC THEORIES, pp. 33-38.

(God can be known by the ordinary use of the intellect.)

(1) *Pantheism.* (2) *Deism.* (3) *Modern 'Theism.'*

II. ANTITHEISTIC THEORIES, pp. 38-44.

(God cannot be known at all by man.)

(1) *Atheism.* (2) *Agnosticism.* (3) *Materialism.*

III. MIRACLE AND NATURAL LAW, pp. 44-52.

Present unpopularity of Miracle due to two causes.

(1) *Secularity.* (2) *Science.*

(i) Miracles, Relative and Absolute.

(ii) Miracles not arbitrary or chaotic.

(iii) Miracles as Personal dealing.—Analogies :

(*a*) Experiment and observation.

(*b*) Personal action in general.

(iv) Miracle essential to Revelation.

A. *Supernatural Revelation*

Summary of previous Argument.—So far we have endeavoured to show the reasonableness of a Revelation of religious truth to man; a Revelation such as would supplement the results obtainable by the ordinary working of his reason upon the world in which he finds himself placed. We have seen that those results, noble as they are, fail both in certainty and in adequacy. We have seen also analogies in our ordinary life which suggest in a dim way the possibility of such further guidance.

But it is obvious that such a Revelation must be in some sense '*supernatural.*' It must lie above and beyond the normal process of our acquisition of knowledge. It will be, as it were, a direct and personal dealing with us, something like that of parent with child or of teacher with pupil.

Supernatural Revelation not unnatural.—To say that it is supernatural is not, of course, to say that it is *un*natural, still less that it is contrary to Nature, or contradictory of Nature's Laws. This we shall see more clearly later on, when we come to speak of the relation of Miracle to Natural Law (p. 44 *sqq.*). Yet the word 'supernatural' itself seems to evoke hostility, perhaps because of its past association in many minds with superstition and credulity. And so it has come about, that in spite of the leadings of Natural Religion, there are and have been many intellectual people of recent years who proclaim themselves anti-supernaturalists. They deny both the necessity and the possibility of a supernatural Revelation. Their antagonism to Revelation is in practically all cases based on a similar denial of the supernatural, or at any rate of man's possible contact with it. And in this, we may remark, they all alike range themselves in opposition not merely to this or that definite form of belief, but to the general tendency of the whole human race. For, as we have seen above (p. 11 *sqq.*), whatever may be the limitation of the *argumentum e consensu gentium,* it bears clear testimony to this at least, that man as man, be he civilised or uncivilised, clings constantly to a belief in the

supernatural, and in his own opportunities of real contact therewith.

The vast majority of mankind to-day are either Christians, Buddhists, or Mohammedans, and these religions monopolise, in name at least, the civilised nations of the earth. But a belief in the supernatural, and in some kind of Revelation that involves the supernatural is not confined to these. The various Pagan religions which lurk in the dark corners of the world give the same witness, and it is this, that *a belief in the supernatural is natural to man*, and that under its shadow he has attained to whatever of intellectual or moral growth has marked his life so far.

B. *Antagonists of Supernatural Revelation*

Though ancient and modern antagonists of Revelation are at one in their denial of the supernatural, yet they have characteristic differences in their points of view, and so it may be well to consider shortly each of the leading forms of antagonistic theory.

Classification of the theories.—These theories are philosophical rather than religious. Their outcome is either I. That Supernatural Revelation is *unnecessary* because God can be known by the ordinary use of the intellect; or II. That Supernatural Revelation is *impossible* because there is no God, or if there be a God He is from His very nature 'unknowable.'

I. To the former class belong (1) **Pantheism** as it appears in much modern philosophical writing; (2) **Deism**, the doctrine so prevalent in the eighteenth century; (3) Modern '**Theism**,' which is as it were a warmer and more highly coloured Deism.

These all involve a belief in a God of some kind, and we shall call them *Inadequate Theistic Theories*.

II. To the second class belong (1) all forms of **Atheism**, *i.e.* the blank denial of the existence of any God at all. (2) **Agnosticism**—a modern growth, belonging to a scientific and self-conscious age—the theory that if there be a God (which we have no right to affirm or to deny), He must be, from His very nature, inscrutable, unknowable. (3) There is also a third form of theory which though

Agnostic or Atheistic in its tendency may be classed by itself because of its aggressive and positive character, viz. **Materialism**, or '**Naturalism**,' as Mr. A. J. Balfour has named it. This last is definitely the outgrowth of modern scientific research, and deliberately sets its face against anything that claims to be at all supernatural or miraculous. This second class embraces what may be called *Anti-theistic Theories.*

It must be borne in mind, however, that these names represent ideas rather than sects, and that the classification given, though useful, is necessarily imperfect. There are many ways in which these groups of ideas may blend, or 'shade off' into one another: *e.g.* Materialism may be Pantheistic, or Agnostic, or Atheistic in its tendency. Pantheism may be very near to Theism, or very close to Atheism. Atheism is no 'School of Thought,' and one is tempted to deny that a real Atheist can exist; yet honest men who call themselves Atheists must be taken at their word. Agnosticism should properly be a simple suspension of judgment, but in most cases it involves a bias against Theism.

I. INADEQUATE THEISTIC THEORIES

1. **Pantheism.**—Pantheism identifies the universe with God. It is a theory which regards all finite things as merely aspects, modifications, or parts of one eternal self-existent Being. It denies personality in God and in man. It is determinist; it denies that the world is a freely willed production, making it an eternal process which could not have been otherwise than it is. The *All* of nature is and must be coextensive with God, and the Divine Being is fully and exhaustively expressed in Nature. Hence the idea of progress and development in the world are logically impossible to a Pantheist.

Pantheism differs from Deism in that it recognises the immanence of God in the world: it differs from *true* Theism in that it fails to recognise His transcendence.

Pantheism is not strictly a religion; rather it is a philosophy. But it forms the basis of so-called religions,

as in India, as well as of systems of philosophy, as in ancient Greece and modern Germany.

In India, on the basis of an older Polytheism (which seems to have involved no doctrine of real creation) was erected the system of the Vedanta Philosophy, of which the central idea is that Brahma (=the Absolute) alone exists, everything else is illusion. To meditate away your illusion of personal existence is to know Brahma—to become Brahma. The outcome of this is *acosmism, i.e.* the denial of the reality of the world of sense and consciousness. Buddhism, which arose in the sixth century B.C., chiefly as a protest against the evils of the *social* system of Brahminism, has a similar Pantheistic basis. (On Buddhism, see further, ch. iii. p. 56 *sqq.*)

In ancient Greece all the pre-Socratic schools seem to have been Pantheistic in their tendencies, with the exception of Democritus and his followers. But the first clear expression of Pantheism in Greece is perhaps among the Eleatics. The philosophy of the Eleatic Parmenides, like that of Brahminism, merged the world in Abstract Being—one, indivisible, incapable of change, of birth or destruction, of past or future. His philosophy held, like the Indian systems, that all which 'seems to us,' on the evidence of our senses, is illusion.

To come to modern times, the first great names are those of Giordano Bruno (1600) and Spinoza (1632-1677). Spinoza constructs his theory of the universe in a rigid, mathematical way. He calls God 'Natura naturans,' and the world 'Natura naturata.' God is Absolute Substance, of which all finite things are modes or attributes, and his doctrine is that the Absolute Substance must express itself necessarily and completely in its attributes: there is no such thing as free action. Spinoza has a nominal belief in Divine Personality, due, no doubt, to his early training as a Jew; but his system practically denies the possibility of personality in God or man. Therein, indeed, lies the most obvious condemnation of this as of every other form of Pantheism. Apart from the defects of its theology, when compared with the demands of our nature, it fails to explain or in any way correspond with our primary convictions of our own personal existence,

and of our own responsibility as moral beings. It has no room for Personality. Later representatives of Pantheism in Germany are Fichte, Schelling, Hegel. In England we have no eminent exponents, but there are Pantheistic tendencies visible in the writings of Thomas Carlyle and Matthew Arnold.

2. **Deism.**—Deism is the antithesis of Pantheism. It recognises, which Pantheism does not, the *transcendence* of God—that He is, so to speak, something above and beyond the world. On the other hand, it ignores or denies the *immanence* of God in the world, that side of the truth which Pantheism emphasises and exaggerates. Deism is characteristic of the eighteenth century in England. Among its most notable exponents in France was Rousseau.

The new knowledge of the universe ushered in by the establishment of the Copernican system of astronomy had impressed people's minds with the majesty and inevitableness of Natural Law. The world was seen to be a much more vast and complicated system than had ever been supposed; and it was found to be ordered throughout by uniform laws. It was in fact an elaborate mathematical arrangement, in which all the relations and proportions were capable of minute and exact calculation. And so—as is the case to-day—the Uniformity of Nature came to be almost an object of worship. But the Deists were not led like our contemporaries into Agnosticism or Atheism, rather they were led to an exaggeration of the value and scope of Natural Theology.

Deism was, from one point of view, a reaction from what the Deists would call 'Dogmatism' and 'Priestcraft.' The noble theology of the seventeenth century had passed away and been succeeded by a theology of a more shallow and narrow type. Against this the Deists, strong in the sense of what reason had discovered about the Universe, had pleaded for *Free-thinking*, and denied—some more, some less sweepingly—the claims of revealed religion.

Certain special points in Deistic doctrine demand a few remarks. Its watchwords were 'God, Freedom, Immortality'; and we will touch upon each of these in order.

(1) *God and Creation.*—Deism held that God is a real Creator, but is, as it were, banished from the world He once made. Miracle was impossible; for no personal dealings with the world were acknowledged subsequent to the one great miracle of creation.

Hence the idea of even a very general *Providence* lost all its meaning, and a *special Providence* became impossible.

Rejecting Revelation, which alone can enable us to surmount the difficulties of mere Natural Theology, Deism, like Job's friends (cf. Job xiii. 7 *sqq.*) exaggerates the Design-argument, and ignores the difficulties with which that argument is encumbered.

(2) *Doctrine of Man.*—Man is regarded as the chief of God's works, the climax and the lord of creation. But the Deist's view of human nature is almost Pelagian as regards denial of Divine grace; almost Manichaean in the way in which it connects *evil* with the *body*. The Deists admitted freedom of the will—indeed it was one of their watchwords—but tended to regard the right use of it as something exceptional or heroic. Some of their writings are of the very worst moral tendency.

(3) *Immortality.*—Deism takes a pagan view of immortality. It believes, *i.e.* in the immortality of the soul, and not, as Christianity teaches, in the resurrection of the body, and continued existence of the whole man.

The foregoing sketch will probably have made clear the inadequacy of Deism to meet the demands of human nature or explain the facts of the universe. Indeed, the general rejection of the old mechanical view of the universe has put it 'out of court.' Believers and unbelievers alike would be unable to-day to rest in a theory of the universe which represents it as a complicated machine, produced complete in its present form one day in the remote past, and 'going of itself ever since.'

3. **Modern 'Theism.'**—In most essential points Modern Speculative Theism, as represented in the writings of F. W. Newman, Theodore Parker, W. R. Gray, and Miss F. P. Cobbe, shows the same religious tendency as the Deism of the eighteenth century. 'There is,' says Dr. Bruce (*Apologetics*, p. 132) 'the same rejection of revelation, the same reduction of religion to a few elementary

beliefs made accessible to all by the light of nature, the same naturalistic conception of God's relation to the world, the same sceptical attitude towards the miraculous in every shape and form.'

'Theism' differs from Deism mainly in what may be called its emotional warmth and colouring, just as the modern organic conception of the universe is brighter, livelier, and more attractive than the more mechanical conception in which the eighteenth century Deists were nurtured.

In connection with this we find what looks like a fundamental difference between the two, viz., that whereas Deism tended to think of God as merely transcendent—banished, as it were, from His creation, and at most a spectator of its history, Modern Theism, under the influence perhaps of the view of the world most congenial to the group of doctrines known as 'Evolution,' tends to conceive of God as merely immanent—imprisoned as it were in the world. In this way the theory comes very near to Pantheism. And indeed Miss Cobbe admits that nothing but the use of *prayer* can save it from leading off in that direction. It has no hold on —no logical place for—the doctrine of Personality in God.

The attitude towards Holy Scripture and towards Christ is one of *eulogy* without allegiance. The Scriptures are spoken of as the most excellent of the productions of *human genius* within the sphere of religion, but their inspiration is denied. The 'Theist' has more enthusiasm for the Bible than the Deist had, but they are alike in denying that it contains any divine revelation; similarly they deny the Divinity of Christ, and even His absolute moral perfection, but call themselves 'Christian Theists' in virtue of their admiration of His unique character. As a result, in part, of their more friendly attitude towards the Bible we find in modern 'Theism' a fuller realisation of such a doctrine as that of the *Fatherhood of God*. We find, in fact, a brightness and an emotional glow that are borrowed from Christianity, and indeed cannot be justified on the 'Theist's' principles of a merely natural theology.

As regards the important question of *human freedom*,

the Pantheistic tendency of these writers militates strongly against any real acceptance of free will. The human will is, as it were, absorbed in the Divine. This being the case, God is bound to save all men—and in order to vindicate His goodness in this way, the modern Theist sacrifices human freedom.

Thus it will be seen that, without actually following the Pantheistic logic to its bitter end, and denying personality, and with it the possibility of a real immortality, Modern Theism lays itself open to many of the same criticisms. And further, while failing to strike the true mean between Pantheism and Deism it invites the charge of inconsistency by attempting to combine the principles of both. Its optimism—like that of Deism—has to ignore a number of real difficulties, and it attempts to conceive of God as a Father, while scarcely able to maintain a precarious grasp of the conception of His Personality.

II. ANTITHEISTIC THEORIES

1. **Atheism** is the definite rejection of belief in a God. It is not a system but a group of many discordant systems which agree only in the point of denial of God's existence. Among modern exponents of dogmatic Atheism are Feuerbach, Flourens, and Bradlaugh. A typical extreme statement is that of Feuerbach, quoted by Professor Flint (*Antitheistic Theories*, p. 7)—'There is no God; it is as clear as the sun and as evident as the day that there is no God; and still more, that there can be none.' If it were not for such statements as these, we might suppose it impossible, in view of the ordinary arguments of natural theology, that any thinking man in any age should profess adherence to such a doctrine.

It is true that in modern times the universality of religion has been disputed. Instances have been alleged of whole tribes of savages having no religion whatever. Professor Flint has shown that the evidence for the existence of these Atheistic tribes is extremely precarious; but if it were very much stronger than it is, its force as an argument would still be much weakened by

the consideration of the inevitable effect of centuries of degradation (see above, p. 14).

All that the religious argument demands is that these tribes should have in them (as a residuum) a *capacity* for religious belief; and this is being proved by Christian missionaries day by day.

Weakness of Atheism.—The Fourteenth Psalm speaks of the Atheist as a 'moral fool' (NABAL). And in the East the absence of religious belief is still to-day regarded as a token of a folly which has its root in *moral* rather than intellectual ineptitude—'the self-defence,' as has been said, 'of a disobedient heart.' It seems to the Oriental mind the height of absurdity that a man should on *intellectual* grounds deny the existence of God. We Westerns perhaps approach the discussion from a somewhat different side. But from our intellectual point of view the absurdity of Atheism may well seem almost as great. For what does the Atheist assert but that *in the very widest possible sphere he has evidence enough to prove a negative*?

The difficulty of proving a negative is proverbial. In this particular case the difficulty would be indefinitely increased. You must *know all things* before you can prove that there is no God; while, on the other hand, the inference that there *is* a God may be warranted by a very little knowledge of the universe. The unsatisfactory character of Atheism has been pointed out by implication in a former chapter, where we dealt with the subject of religion as an universal need or tendency of human nature (p. 11 *sqq.*). It may be worth while here to suggest certain prominent reasons why it has been judged incapable of satisfying the intellect and heart of mankind.

(i) *It does not satisfy reason.*—(1) When it takes the form of extreme scepticism, this is obviously the case. Such an Atheism gives up the problem of the universe, and is a practical denial of reason. (2) Or, in another form, it ascribes the world to an eternal succession of causes, of which there is no first cause; or (3) it makes matter and its laws accountable for all that is. This is surely to make the lowest responsible for the highest; or (4) in the form of Subjective Idealism, it makes the

world the creation of the individual human mind: 'Did not human brains,' says Schopenhauer, 'objects scarcely as big as a large fruit, sprout up incessantly like mushrooms, the world would sink into nothingness!'

(ii) Atheism also *fails to satisfy the heart* of man. It offers him Truth, Beauty, and Virtue as substitutes for God. But what is *Truth* without God? Could the knowledge of all the facts of the universe—could even the possession of the whole universe—satisfy our instincts of love, reverence, adoration?

Beauty, again, in art or in nature, cannot satisfy. Art, at its best, has always been the 'handmaid of religion.' Nature, if it be regarded (as on Atheistic principles it must be) as the embodiment of impersonal force, is prevailingly *terrible* rather than beautiful (see Strauss, in Flint, *Antitheistic Theories*, p. 30).

Virtue is alleged as a substitute for religion, almost as though it were a doctrine characteristic of Atheism. But the believer has all the non-religious incentives to virtue that the Atheist has, and he has besides all the religious sanctions of virtue. The Atheist may say, 'I simply look facts in the face, and do not wish for any sanctions of virtue but the real ones.' The answer is: Can truth and goodness be at variance with one another? Can belief in a lie be more favourable to the moral perfection of mankind than belief in the truth? And yet it is certain, as a matter of history, that religious motives and sanctions have been the strongest incentives to virtue.

2. **Agnosticism.**—The invention of this title is claimed by T. H. Huxley. Its characteristic modern exponent in England has been Herbert Spencer.

Agnosticism must in theory be distinguished from Atheism, though in practice it often tends in the same direction. Atheism, as we have seen, is an attempt to form a theory of the universe in which the existence of God is definitely denied; and so Atheism is just as dogmatic as Pantheism, Deism, or Theism. This dogmatism, whether it be positive or negative, is abhorrent to the Agnostic. He regards both extremes as alike in error; they are to him equally futile attempts to solve a problem which is really insoluble. Thus Herbert

Spencer says that 'the power which the universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable,' and that 'it is alike our highest wisdom and our highest duty to regard that through which all things exist as the Unknowable.'

One of the main props of Agnosticism has been Kant, though he would never have called himself an Agnostic. He recognised and emphasised the unconvincing character of the intellectual arguments (see pp. 19, 20) for the existence of God—ontological, ætiological, teleological—and put all the burden of proof on the argument from conscience. The modern Agnostic would say that Kant was illogical in stopping where he did: all these arguments are to him alike insufficient to produce certainty, because the only certainties we can arrive at are those derived from experience gained through our senses. For there is a point where the Agnostic lays aside his Agnosticism. He accepts the results of the physical sciences, because they are verified by the experience of the senses. It is as though he said: 'If you wish me to believe in religion, you must *prove* the existence of God in the same way as the facts of the physical sciences are proved.'

But is not the existence of God, if He exists at all, of the nature of a 'first principle,' which cannot be deduced from anything else because it is primary? We ask the Agnostic to adopt in this matter the same attitude which he adopts towards the first principles of the different sciences. But that is not all. The principle of the existence of God, if admitted, will be primary in a unique sense. If He exist, as we saw above (p. 8 *sq.*), His existence goes back behind all the principles of all the sciences. It underlies everything that is. Hence the only test which the Agnostic will accept is proved inapplicable.

But the same line of thought will lead us to a further conclusion which the Agnostic must face. Supposing there be a God (and the hypothesis cannot, on Agnostic principles, be absurd), any theory that may be made concerning the world which ignores His existence, however much it may be based on observed facts and on uniformities inferred from those facts, must, as a theory of the

world, be worthless, however accurate in detail as far as it goes. A critique of Shakspeare's *Hamlet* which should leave out the character of the Prince of Denmark, would be infinitely more adequate and satisfactory!

The Agnostic, as we have seen, declares the arguments of natural theology to be insufficient. The Christian 'dogmatist' admits as much, yet holds that they testify to an unmistakable demand of human nature, and that they lead up to revelation. But supernatural Revelation is also a bugbear to the Agnostic. Much of the Agnostic writing of late years has taken the form of destructive criticism of the Gospels.

Any attempt to deal with the accounts of the life of Christ which starts with a denial of the miraculous must necessarily tear the Gospels to pieces, and that is what has been done. The Divinity of Christ is denied; the Gospels are 'expurgated' in an arbitrary way. Many of their most characteristic parts (though written within seventy years, at latest, of the events recorded) are treated as mythical accretions. And at the same time the central Figure of the Gospels is, quite illogically, regarded as an uniquely great and good man.

As we shall see later on, there is no reasonable alternative between the acceptance of His Divine claims and the rejection of His character as even relatively perfect (cf. p. 86 *sqq.*).

3. **Modern Materialism.**—Materialism is an attempt to get rid of the apparent dualism of the universe by resolving mind or spirit into matter. To the Materialist matter is the only really existing thing; all else, including what we habitually regard as spiritual, such as mind, soul, personality, are to be explained in terms of matter. Thus, Thought would be described not as an activity of the mind, but as a function or secretion of the material brain.

This theory is not a new one, though in its modern form it is closely linked with the physical science of to-day.

There was Materialism, *e.g.* in China, more than three centuries B.C. Yang-Choo taught a form of Materialism which denied God and the future life, and boldly justified sensuality and selfishness (see Flint, *Ant. Th.*,

pp. 45 *sqq.*). A similar doctrine also appeared in India (see *id.* p. 47). In the West Materialism was taught by certain Greek philosophers—Leucippus, Democritus (*c.* 430 B.C.), Epicurus (*c.* 300 B.C.); and Epicurus found a talented Latin disciple in Lucretius (d. B.C. 55).

The Materialistic theory in its modern form may be described in this way (cf. Bruce, *Apol.*, p. 93):—'To account for all the phenomena of Nature, including those of life, vegetable and animal, and of thought, nothing more is needed than matter and its properties. Matter and force have built up the universe, the former being the stuff out of which the structure has been raised, the latter the architect by whose unconscious skill it has been shaped into a cosmos,' or ordered, harmonious universe.

There are three points at which Materialism finds itself in difficulties, apart from the primal difficulty of supposing the world to be the result of a fortuitous concourse of atoms. The first is the *origin of life*. How can life, even in its most elementary form, be evolved from any combination or interaction of dead matter and blind force? And the second is the origin of *sentient life*; animal life with its wonderfully varied faculties and conditions of existence is still more inconceivable as a product of mere matter and force. And the third and greatest difficulty of all is to account on materialistic principles for the origin of that highest form of life of which we have direct experience, the *rational, self-conscious* life of man. The whole mass of human language, thought, and belief must needs be reformed if we are to accept the Materialistic theory. '*Securus judicat orbis terrarum.*' Is the whole world of humanity from first to last utterly wrong in its view of itself? Materialism may explain away Spirit or Mind into brain—'a mass of grey matter'; Volition into a series of muscular and nervous reactions; Thought and Memory into a series of 'states of consciousness,' and explain these again as entirely physical. But common-sense finds itself unable to accept such jargon, and persists in regarding the physical and material part of man as subordinate—the minister of the immaterial, spiritual element.

Modern Materialism is really no better than the Materialism of the ancient world, which was rejected on common-sense grounds. But its speciousness consists in the fact that it loves to identify itself with physical science. It cannot, however, be too strongly insisted, that science and materialism are not identical. The aim and scope of physical science is not to propound a speculative theory of the origin of the universe; but, by a careful examination, analysis, and classification of facts, to make us as fully acquainted as we can be with the characteristics of that universe as it actually is.

III. MIRACLE AND NATURAL LAW

Present unpopularity of Miracle.—Miracle like predictive prophecy is in disfavour with the present generation. Instead of making religion more impressive and attractive to the average mind, the claim of the miraculous too often brings Christianity into ridicule. Many who find in miracle an obstacle to belief would be willing to accept a Christianity stripped of all its supernatural clothing. Are we then to take a rationalistic line, and whittle down the miraculous element in Christianity? On the contrary, we would contend that the objection to miracle is based on a misconception, and that the miraculous is no mere adjunct, but an essential element in revelation.

Take away the supernatural, the miraculous, and you rob Christianity of all that is distinctive and of all, or nearly all, that is religiously valuable. It will be no longer a religion, but rather a philosophy like Pantheism. To the Pantheist miracle is indeed impossible, because God and Nature are to him identical; but to one who cannot but attribute to his Creator Personality—that which he recognises as highest in himself—the case is different. If *e.g.* the normal succession of physical causes without anything like personal overruling be the only possible answer to prayer, then man's religious needs and yearnings find no satisfaction—he has and can have no direct personal dealing with his God. He asks bread, and receives . . . a stone.

And the denial of miracle not only does violence to

human nature; it also involves arbitrary violence to document and history. A New Testament expurgated of the miraculous is a New Testament eviscerated—a mangled ruin. Human history since the Apostolic Age —if the miracles of the Resurrection and Ascension be denied—is, much of it, a series of effect with no adequate cause. (See further pp. 85, 103, *sqq.*)

Thus we may draw from the needs of human nature, and from the phenomena of literature and of history, a presumption against the denial of the miraculous. How far such presumption may be worth considering we can only judge by examining more closely the reasons for the unpopularity of miracle in this age. The two chief reasons may undoubtedly be classed under the heads of 'Secularity' and 'Science.'

(1) Of **Secularity** we need not speak at length. We mean that absorption in the things of this visible world which leads to what might be called 'atrophy of the religious faculties.' Granting for the purposes of argument that there *is* an eternal world and a life beyond the grave, there can be no doubt that the majority of men progressively unfit themselves for realising its reality by habitually ignoring it. In Biblical language (1 Cor. ii. 14) the 'natural' man has not the faculty for receiving things that are 'spiritually discerned.'

(2) But the weightier objections are those which shelter themselves under the name of **Science**. And the sum of them is this: 'The very idea of Miracle is excluded by the doctrine of the Uniformity of Nature, by the conception of the all-embracing "Reign of Law," which the march of science is establishing more firmly day by day.'

We hope to show that the supposed antagonism between natural science and the miraculous, if not entirely imaginary, is at least exaggerated; and depends partly on a mistaken view of the sphere of physical science, partly on a misconception as to the nature of miracle.

There are various points of view from which the problem may be approached. We propose first to suggest a classification of miracles which if accepted will show the absurdity of supposing a 'conflict' between

miracle and natural law. Next we shall try to meet two common misconceptions as to the nature of miracle—(*a*) that it is merely capricious, arbitrary, and chaotic, and (*b*) that it cannot by any means find a place in any hierarchy of law and system. Finally—and here, we believe, stands the true stronghold of miracle—we shall consider miracle in the light of the doctrine of Divine Personality.

I. **Miracles relative and absolute.**—There is a valuable classification of miracles suggested by Rothe, and adopted by various modern writers, whereby they are distinguished as **relative** and **absolute**. The absolute miracles are such as involve *creative acts*—acts, *e.g.*, involving the creation of new material, as, for instance, Christ's multiplication of the loaves, or His turning of the water into wine.

Absolute Miracles not contrary to Natural Laws.—Now, of the absolute miracles it is evident that they can involve no conflict with the laws of Nature. For till the moment when the miracle is complete, the whole action lies outside the physical domain; physical laws have no more to do with it than they have with the original creation of the nucleus of the world—the origin of matter. And as soon as the miracle is complete and the result produced, that result *does* conform to Nature's laws. We are evidently intended to infer from the Gospel narratives that the bread and the wine miraculously supplied by Christ exhibited the properties of ordinary bread and wine and conformed to the laws to which they conform. The wine 'made glad' the guests at Cana and was mistaken indeed for ordinary wine—only extraordinarily good in quality. The bread was palatable to the multitude and satisfied their hunger. The broken pieces left had nothing phantom-like or mysterious about them. They filled the hands that gathered them and the fishermen's baskets into which they were thrown.

So much for the 'absolute' miracles. Neither before nor after their completion can they be said to conflict with natural law. The creative act lies above the physical order; the created product conforms thereto.

Relative Miracles not contrary to Natural Laws.—With regard to 'relative' miracles the case would seem to be simpler still. For these do not involve any creative act, but rather a providential disposition of materials and forces already at work in the world. Thus, the drying up of the Red Sea at the Exodus may have been effected by means of a more than ordinarily violent wind, and the drying up of the Jordan forty years later by a landslip in the upper reaches of the gorge. The miraculous character of these events will then lie simply or chiefly in the fact of their providential appropriateness to the occasion, and of their prediction by those who shared the Divine counsel. The events themselves will suggest nothing to conflict in any way with known laws of Nature.

The above classification, however, valuable as it is up to a certain point, does not perhaps provide a complete answer to all difficulties. There remains in the mind a feeling that even if it is applicable to all the alleged miracles of the Bible, it fails to remove the uncomfortable feeling of 'interference' associated with the idea of miracle, and the notion that on its 'creative' side, if it lies outside the sphere of natural science, it still introduces an element of the arbitrary and capricious into the world, which strikes at the root of our scientific conceptions. We must endeavour to meet this difficulty to the best of our power.

II. Miracles not arbitrary or chaotic.—Miracles have been supposed to introduce an element of the irrational and unaccountable into Nature. But if Nature be not rational and uniform, there can be no such thing as Science: the world is a chaos, not a cosmos, an ordered whole. The Christian view of human nature, however, as embodied in the doctrine of the Fall, implies that there is already a disturbing element at work in the world—sin. If this be so (and there is certainly enough evidence in ethics, psychology, and the study of human nature in general to justify the adoption of this doctrine as a hypothesis), then the miraculous element might come in naturally and even inevitably in connection with the redressing of the balance.

Miracles not arbitrary.—Such miracles, *e.g.*, as those recorded in the New Testament, may be shown to be in some sense rational and accountable—to have a meaning and a purpose.

In general, those miracles may be said to have the purpose of attesting the truth of a divine revelation, a purpose which could scarcely be fulfilled without miracle of some kind. We believe them, however, to fulfil this purpose not as something external to the revelation, something separate, *added* ('credentials'), but rather as an integral part of the revelation itself. Of that more anon.

In particular, if we take our Lord's miracles one by one, the more we study them the more we perceive their rational connection with their environment. We see how they harmonise, *e.g.*, with the general picture of Christ's character which we draw from the Four Gospels; that they supplement and enforce His teaching, and that they have a peculiar appropriateness to the circumstances in each case. In fact, the more we study some at any rate of our Lord's miracles, the more does the impression grow upon us that they are not merely reasonable but as it were *inevitable*. It may be, indeed, that what we call 'miracles' would turn out, if we knew all, to be as inevitable in their own sphere as what we call 'natural events.'

Miracles not necessarily 'lawless.'—There is a sense in which any Theist would say with S. Augustine that all the working of Nature and her laws is miraculous. From this point of view 'miracle' distinctively so-called would be God's way of arresting the attention of human minds, dulled by familiarity with the daily miracle of His uniform working in Nature. But may it not also be true that these special miracles are simply the occasional manifestation of a higher set of laws than those with which physical science makes us familiar? And these laws, though miraculous in their effects, from the point of view of ordinary physical law, may still be as closely linked to, and as really continuous with, that system of things in which we ordinarily move, as the laws, *e.g.*, of organic life are to the laws which govern the inorganic.

We see, in fact, in Nature a sort of hierarchy or ascending series of modes of existence which may form a valuable analogy.

1. The inorganic.
2. The organic, as represented by vegetable life.
3. Animal life.
4. Rational, self-conscious, personal life—the life of man.

Each of these is, to a large extent, based on those below it and conforms, in so far, to the laws which regulate those lower spheres. But each has something superadded. It possesses possibilities and it conforms to laws which are foreign to the stratum beneath it. And to that extent it may be spoken of as miraculous from the point of view of the more limited life.

A somewhat similar analogy may be drawn from geometry. There, each succeeding 'dimension' is based upon those below it (as, *e.g.*, a superficies may be said to have a line as its basis), but each adds something as alien and as inconceivable *a priori* as a 'fourth dimension' is to us who habitually live in three. To the inhabitants of 'Flatland' a solid body would be a miracle utterly subversive of the known uniformity of Nature!

III. Miracles viewed as 'interference' may be regarded as instances of **personal dealing.**

We have tried so far to suggest that 'miracle' is not necessarily excluded by the conception of Natural Law; that it is not necessarily capricious, arbitrary, irrational, and that it may quite possibly represent the occasional glimpse of the working of a higher law. This suggestion may be enormously reinforced if we consider shortly the effects of human personality, remembering that the God of Christianity is essentially a Personal Being.

(*a*) **Experiment and Observation.**—In speaking of Revelation, we have already had occasion to remark that a supernatural revelation from God might bear to His ordinary revealing of Himself in Nature a relation analogous to that between experiment and observation in human research. Results are obtained by experiment with a speed and a certainty quite unattainable by those

who are content simply to sit by and watch Nature at work. How is this done? Not by any breach of the laws of the physical world. Rather by intelligent and discriminating obedience to them. '*Natura parendo vincitur.*' A new force indeed is introduced—the element of personality, human mind and human will and human strength, working all together for a definite purpose. The material is redisposed, the conditions modified, the results isolated, but, all through, not one of Nature's laws is or could be broken. Indeed, the uniformity of Nature is the necessary condition of the experiment's success. Otherwise there would be nothing to count upon. The experiments thus possible to modern science and their stable, practical results in matters, *e.g.*, like surgery, telegraphy, engineering, and many more, would have appeared little short of miraculous to any previous age. They are, all of them, simply the results of the action of personality upon Nature's forces in accordance with Nature's laws.

(*b*) **Personal action in general.**—The ordinary phenomena of human volition will be found to present again and again characteristics in their own degree very like those which mark alleged miracles of God.

There is indeed in *human* nature an element which may almost be called capricious, irrational, unaccountable. Unaccountable, the Christian says, except on the hypothesis of the 'Fall.' But taking human action at its best—in its most rational and moral form—we find that it still produces an effect upon the course of Nature which looks like forcible interference. Take the instance of a child rescued from drowning. Its fall into the water was in obedience to the law of gravitation, and of its submersion the same is true. The suffocation which will normally ensue is in accordance with the laws which govern respiration, and so on. A bystander jumps in and saves the child. The chain of cause and effect otherwise inevitable is interrupted, is diverted. How is this done? By the action of the muscles of the rescuer, controlled throughout by the laws of muscular action. Behind this is the force of human will; and behind this again moral principles which direct the will;

all these are acting normally, and there is no breach of law anywhere.

Is it not in some higher form of personal action, of which this is but the reflection or image, that we may find the explanation of the alleged redemptive miracles of God?

The force of all such arguments is further increased if we see in miracles the hand of Nature's Lawgiver. In Him we should have an adequate cause for the mightiest effects. The Mont Cenis Tunnel, as has been said, would be quite unaccountable considered as a mere 'work of Nature.' It presents features which render such an account of it incredible. But considered as a work of man, and as designed for the purposes of a railway tunnel, it is both credible and reasonable. Similarly marvels, otherwise incredible, become credible when attributed to Almighty Power, and when the purpose of their performance is found to be so reasonable and intelligible a purpose as that of the self-revelation to man of a personal God, with a view to man's redemption. If this involved a real breach or upsetting of the reign of law, it might be as inconceivable to the Christian as to the sceptic. God cannot deny Himself. 'He hath given' to His creation 'a law which cannot be broken': but personal action, as we have seen, can modify and overrule the otherwise inevitable results of that law without any insult to its majesty.

IV. **Miracles Essential to Revelation.**—Having attempted to remove certain misconceptions about the relation of miracle to Natural Law, we are free to turn again to the earlier question of the relation of miracle to Revelation.

A supernatural Revelation would seem to involve the miraculous as its inevitable accompaniment. If God should reveal Himself to man by a higher and more direct method than that of Natural Theology, such a method must pass out beyond the ordinary realm of physical causes and effects. Something of this sort is implied in the very word 'supernatural.'

Miracles as 'Credentials' of Revelation.—A view which used to be popular was that which regarded miracles as a sort of adjunct or appendix to revelation; something

external, and, as it were, loosely attached; something which Revelation brings with it as a guarantee of good faith, as an ambassador brings his credentials. This was surely the point of view of those Jews whom S. Paul accused of seeking after 'a sign' (1 Cor. i. 22), and to whom Christ when challenged refused to give any other sign than that of the 'Prophet Jonah' (S. Matt. xii. 39, 40); a sign, as it would seem, essential to His redemptive work—viz., the death and resurrection.

Miracles not External Credentials.—That miracles in some sense fulfil the function of credentials is no doubt quite true; but this view, if isolated, creates a tendency to look for portentous, arbitrary manifestations. And it is just that which has alienated many thoughtful minds.

Miracles then are credentials, because a divine revelation is bound to carry with it marks of its supernatural origin. But the Ambassador in this case contains within Himself His credentials. They are a part of His being. Christ moves naturally in the atmosphere of the supernatural. Miraculous power streams from Him. His character, His teaching, would be incomplete without it. Miracle is indeed a 'sign' of His mission and His Divinity, but only because it is first a part or aspect of His very self.

If we examine the New Testament conception of the Resurrection we shall see that this is so. What S. Paul (Rom. i. 4) adduces as a proof of Christ's Divinity, S. Peter (Acts ii. 24) describes as an inevitable event.

Summarily we may say, in view of what has been discussed so far, that Nature is meaningless apart from a God; that God, if He is to be man's and Nature's God, must be at least what we know as 'personal'; that personality in Almighty God, the Creator, and Lawgiver of Nature makes possible, and more than possible, such manifestations of will and purpose as would necessarily appear to us miraculous.

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION AND ITS RIVALS

A. *Introduction*, pp. 53, 54.

B. *Rival Claimants*, pp. 55-74.
- (*a*) Polytheism.
- (*b*) Buddhism.
- (*c*) Mahomedanism.
- (*d*) Judaism.

C. *Christianity*, pp. 74-79.
1. Its relation to Judaism.
2. Its intrinsic character—TRUTH and GRACE.
   - Christianity as Truth.
   - The Incarnation links Truth and Grace.
   - Christianity as Grace.

A. *Introductory*

WE have spoken of the probability of a Revelation. If there be such a God as Natural Religion seems to demand, we are forced to conceive it as distinctly more likely than not that He would not leave His rational human creatures to grope in uncertainty.

We have passed in review the leading alternative theories, the theories that are based on a denial of the supernatural. And while we have found these theories one and all incapable of satisfying the demands of human nature, we have also seen that the supposed antagonism between science and the supernatural is merely superficial; that a supernatural Revelation and the miracles which accompany it may after all be in a

higher sense 'natural' and even inevitable—granted the existence of a personal God.

But if the likelihood—the all but inevitableness—of a Revelation be admitted, we are confronted by a further problem. There are several rival systems before us, each claiming to be the Divine Revelation. How are we to choose between them? Clearly, we must judge them on their merits—intrinsically, historically, and by their effects. *Intrinsically*, which system is most consistent with itself? Which offers the most reasonable and satisfactory explanation of the world and of life? Which satisfies best the needs of our intellectual and moral nature?

Next, *historically*: which has the closest contact with actual history in its origin? Which has the strongest attestation for the historic facts on which it claims to be based, or in which it claims to be embodied?

Finally, we must consider *results*, and ask, Which commends itself most by its effects on human character? Which shows in actual practice the most world-wide adaptability? Which has the power of bringing out the best in all the various shades of capacity and temperament that mark the countless different tribes and families of mankind? Which shows itself most congenial to human progress, in knowledge and civilisation generally?

We believe that the answer to every one of these questions will be found to be the same; and that the honest verdict of any thoughtful and capable person who had tried to compare Christianity in these respects with any of the rival claimants would be to this effect: 'Whether Christianity be *the final religion* or not, it certainly approaches much nearer to finality than any other system that has yet appeared.'

B. *Rival Claimants*

Let us now pass in review the chief non-Christian systems which can claim to have made any headway in the world, so that we may be the better able to judge of their claims to dispute with Christianity the supremacy over mankind.

(*a*) POLYTHEISM

Polytheism is the form which religion practically took all over the ancient world. The only exception is the Hebrew religion, which, while developed on a background like that of kindred Semitic tribes, differs from them all *toto cælo* in its pure Monotheism; as we shall see further on, when we come to speak of Judaism (see p. 65 *sq.*).

Different views are possible with regard to the origin of Polytheism. Some hold it to be due to an association and amalgamation of different tribes having each its own object of reverence ('*totem*'); others would ascribe it to a personification of the most obvious forces of Nature—the sun, moon, stars, springs, forests, etc.;—others, in part to one of these causes and in part to the other. But in any case its claim to be the final Revelation of Divine truth, were such claim to be put forth, would be scarcely worthy of serious consideration. The history of mankind has shown Polytheism to be practically so degrading in its effects, and philosophically so unsatisfying, that no other verdict is possible.

The highest minds of Greece and Rome were forced to abandon it in reality, while they conformed, from habit or for convenience' sake, to its outward rites and ceremonies. Philosophically there was no stopping short of Monotheism, even though the Monotheism of the philosophers was of a very cold and abstract character, and had little practical effect on life and conduct.

The nations in modern times who can be classed as Polytheists represent the most backward sections of the human family; and though the Hinduism, Brahminism, and Buddhism of India might seem to be exceptions, the two latter (see pp. 34, 57) can scarcely be called Polytheistic in any true sense, their characteristics being rather those of Pantheism. And against the two former, backed up though they are by the prestige of an ancient civilisation, may be urged an absolute failure to touch *morality*.

It will not be necessary to consider at length more than one of these—that which represents the highest and

most successful effort of Hindu thought and devotion, and has spread itself in the course of centuries over vast tracts of the neighbouring countries.

(*b*) BUDDHISM

Among nominally Polytheistic systems **Buddhism** would seem to have the greatest claim to consideration; both on account of the number of its adherents, and also because of the attractiveness of some of its doctrines.

It is true that neither 'the supernatural origin of a religion nor even its truth can be decided by the number of its adherents.' Yet a wide domain establishes a *prima facie* claim to consideration.

The number of Buddhists in 1896 was computed at little less than 400,000,000, while that of Christians all over the world did not reach quite 500,000,000, and the adherents of Islam were about 150,000,000 to 200,000,000. Buddhism has of course been longer in the field than either Christianity or Mahomedanism (Buddha's probable date is in the sixth century B.C., contemporaneous with the rise of Cyrus, the end of the Babylonian Captivity, and the return of the Jews). But in comparing the sway of Buddhism with that of Islam, we must remember that its method of propagation has not been the violent method of fire and sword, but the gentle and peaceful one characteristic of Christianity at its best. Its converts therefore may be supposed to have accepted the doctrines on their own merits.

And that those merits are very real and obvious no reasonable person would deny. Its humane gentleness, its inculcation of moral courage and truthfulness, its earnestness of purpose and high ideal of meditation, can scarcely be matched in any system except Christianity itself. 'Taken by itself,' says Max Müller, 'the moral code of Buddhism is one of the most perfect that the world has ever seen.'

Its founder, Siddhattû, often known as Gotama, or Sakya-Mouni (*i.e.* monk of the Sakya family), was an Indian Prince who lived probably in the latter half of the sixth century B.C. He was blest with a beautiful dis-

position, with singularly congenial surroundings, and prospects of conspicuous happiness and splendour. The spectacle of unrelieved suffering at his doors intruded upon his life, and impelled him at the age of twenty-eight to leave all that could minister to his worldly happiness, and become a beggar. He devoted his life to meditation on the misery of human existence and the possibilities of its remedy. After six years of severe asceticism he believed that he had attained to the supreme knowledge ('Bodhi,' hence 'Buddha'). He had found in Nirvana—annihilation—the cure for the miseries of life, which the Brahminism in which he had been brought up could never supply. He had inherited from Brahminism the doctrine of transmigration of souls, and that made him despair of any permanent relief short of annihilation. In this matter of Nirvana, as also in its universal brotherliness, Buddhism was a protest against the religion out of which it grew. *Nirvana* provides an escape from unending transmigration; universal kindliness is to take the place of the social evils connected with caste.

But while its man-ward side, and many features of its morality, are so genuinely good that they may well account for the wideness and duration of its empire, of its definitely religious side the same cannot be said. And the character of this, as will be seen, affects the practical value of its morality. Its central doctrine—Nirvana—personal annihilation—the true end of man, to be attained by long continued and severe asceticism, stamps it at once as negative rather than positive in tendency. And a closer examination confirms this view. Not only is the extinction of personal existence its goal, but this goal is to be attained not by the purification but by the annihilation of all human feelings and all desire for life whether individual or social.

But further, Buddhism is, strictly speaking, not a religion at all, but a philosophy. At heart it is not even Polytheistic (as the language retained in use about Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva might suggest), but rather Pantheistic or Atheistic. Genuine Buddhism has no real object of worship and no hope of a future life. The

objects of veneration in Buddhist temples are images and relics of the Buddha and of other holy men. But though Buddha is venerated and apostrophised in hymns, it is not as a living, supernatural presence — he has attained *Nirvana*. To the strict Buddhists (as to Buddha himself) the old Hindu gods are much what the Hellenic Pantheon was to the philosophers of Greece—so much 'interesting old furniture.'

On the other hand, the ordinary Buddhists, in almost every country where Buddhism is found, practise an elaborate Polytheism, the older heathenism of their own country having been deliberately absorbed by Buddhism. Buddhism, in fact, as it now exists, has become a religion, and it has become this by being untrue to itself. It has been forced, for the sake of self-preservation, to absorb the elements of religion. It has invented deities to save, and a paradise to be sought. Unfortunately these elements are so closely interwoven with superstition that they fail—as Buddhism proper fails—to supply a genuine moral stimulus. The requisite moral stimulus, the consciousness of personal contact with a Divine Helper, and the hope of a positive and glorious future, are just what Christianity offers. Not only does it hold out to man an ideal in which all the best features of Buddhism are included, but it also offers him a strength beyond his own, by which he may attain to that ideal. 'Grace' as well as 'Truth' 'came by Jesus Christ.' And there is this advantage about its ideal and method, which in many respects are strikingly parallel to those of Buddhism —so strikingly indeed as to have given rise to many wild theories of a connection between the two—that they make for the purification, not the annihilation, of the seats of evil in human nature; the perfection, and not the extinction of personal existence.

The force of this consideration will perhaps become clearer when we come to treat of the doctrine of Christianity itself.

(*c*) MAHOMEDANISM

Mahomedanism has been since its origin in the seventh century an open rival of Christianity, and at times an

apparently formidable competitor for the dominion of the nations. It arose, like Buddhism, as a protest against contemporary evils, but its character and methods are very different from those of the religion of Sakya-Mouni. It has been spread, for the most part, by the instrumentality of fire and sword, and therefore the number of its adherents is a matter of less significance. Its outward success, however, has been in some ways and up to a certain point more striking even than that of Buddhism. Its history starts with the flight of Mahomed to Medina in 622 A.D. Henceforth he and his followers are at bay, and their fierce zeal is attended by a wonderful series of triumphs. By 629 Arabia was conquered, and in that year Mahomed crossed swords with the venerable empire of Rome. Syria, Egypt, Persia, and North Africa successively succumbed to these invaders. In 668 they besieged (though unsuccessfully) Constantinople itself. In 709 Spain was at their feet, and a footing gained in Europe. In 732, a hundred years after the death of Mahomed, the tide rolled across the Pyrenees into France; and though driven back by a Christian army under Charles Martel in the decisive battle of Tours (732 A.D.) Mahomedanism lived on for centuries in Spain; and in the fifteenth century threatened again to overwhelm Europe from the East. The Turks, on whom had fallen the mantle of their effete Arab predecessors, at last captured Constantinople in 1453, and were only stopped at Vienna. Baffled in Europe they still made headway among the more backward races, especially in the Soudan. At present the dominion of Islam stretches across two continents, from the Pacific coast of China and Japan to where the Atlantic washes the shores of Western Africa, and its adherents are estimated at one hundred and fifty or two hundred millions.

What is the origin and character of 'Islam'? for by that name (which means '*submission*') the religion calls itself.

Mahomed, who was born April 20, 572 A.D., and died in 632, was at first a genuine and sincere teacher, possessed with the ruling idea of the Divine Unity, and with a vehement indignation against idolatry. His theology, embodied in the Koran, appears to have been

drawn not from the Old Testament or the New Testament, with both of which he seems to have been unacquainted, but from Talmudic legends and Apocryphal Christian gospels and heretical writings, and the old religious traditions of Syria, Arabia, and Persia. He claims to be bringing back the Arabians to the old purity of religion of their forefather Abraham.

When we try to trace the causes of Islam's success, we find plenty of reasons quite independent of the truth or falsity of its claim to be the universal religion.

(1) First among these must certainly be placed the **element of truth** which it embodies. It had its origin in Arabia, where each tribe and even family had developed its own particular form of crude idolatry. And as against the prevailing superstition and corruption of his countrymen's religion, Mahomed proclaims in clearest tones the unity and majesty of the Deity. 'There is but one God, and Mahomed is His prophet.' 'God is one.' That great master-truth is of itself convincing when once grasped. It involves an intellectual advance on Polytheistic idolatry, and at the same time supplies (as it did for the Hebrews) a unifying force that can bind tribes together in common cause.

(2) A further cause of its success is undoubtedly to be found in its **adaptation to the average Oriental.** Islam does not, like Buddhism, carry us off into a dream-world, nor does it, like Christianity, set up an ideal which shames its imperfect followers at every turn. It represents, it is true, an advance on what Mahomed found existing. He sanctioned polygamy, *e.g.*, but restricted it (except, apparently, in his own case). His moral code is in other respects somewhat severe, and especially aims at combating the vice of drunkenness.

The practical duties, however, of Islam, if somewhat exacting, are, at any rate, clear-cut and simple—stated prayer, alms, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca. The doctrine of God's arbitrary will—that there is no absolute morality, nothing good or evil except what He arbitrarily chooses to enjoin as such—makes morality a less complex thing, inculcates *submission* merely, the least exacting and worrying of virtues. Above all, its doctrine that

the faithful who dies fighting for the cause passes at once into a sensuous paradise puts a premium, so to speak, on a fighting death, and has doubtless contributed more than anything to the advance of its dominion by conquest.

(3) Thirdly, there is its **intense conservatism.** Islam is founded, not like Christianity on a *Life*, but on a *Book*. Its system is inelastic, unyielding, conservative. Attempts have been made from time to time to reform it from within, but all alike have ended in failure. This feature of Islam has prevented it from adapting itself to different ages and needs, but has also secured it from being interfered with by the progress of modern thought. So we find people living in the twentieth century, and in contact with modern civilisation, whose religion and much of whose social life belongs obviously to the seventh century.

(4) Finally, there can be no doubt that much of the apparent success of Islam is due not so much to its intrinsic character as to the **historical circumstances** of its environment. In the Saracens and the Turks, who brought Mahomedanism into Africa and Europe, we have instances of races which, like the Huns and Goths and many other tribes before them, were practically certain, quite apart from their religious belief, to sweep forward in a tide of conquest. The extra touch of fanatical zeal may have contributed to enhance the irresistible movement of their armies, but can hardly be regarded as even the main factor in their success.

It may be well, in conclusion, to suggest a comparison between Islam and Christianity in three ways—(1) as regards its actual *external success* in winning adherents; (2) as a *civilising influence* when it does succeed; and lastly—for so far we shall not have touched the heart of the matter—(3) as a *satisfactory religion*.

(1) In recent years—now that propagation by the sword is less feasible, or possible only in occasional outbreaks in countries like Armenia that are under Mahomedan sway—we find that the **progress** of Islam has practically come to an end among civilised nations. In a few of the most backward regions, as in parts of Africa, Islam still makes converts, and even more converts than

Christianity is making. But where forcible means are excluded, as in India, it is making no advance at all among civilised nations in proportion to the increase of population, but rather declining, while Christianity is advancing speedily, and more speedily of late years. All through the centuries the Christian Church has grown. In the time of Constantine it is estimated that about one-150th of the total population of the world was Christian; to-day Christianity claims one-third, while the total population has increased enormously since the fourth century.

At the present time Christianity is advancing at a greater rate than ever before; and while Islam is outwardly rather declining than increasing, it inwardly shows no possibility of reform or progress such as might give it hope of a fresh impetus in the future.

(2) If the two religions be compared as **civilising influences**, it will be observed at once that Christianity has been (see further pp. 129 *sqq.*) the nursing-mother of European civilisation. When we turn to Islam, it is equally obvious that the nations under her dominion are usually among the least progressive to be found in their respective regions. We need scarcely instance the blighting effect of Mahomedanism as evinced in both the European and the Asiatic dominions of the Turkish and the Russian empires. Not only is progress foreign to the creed of Islam, but the accompaniments of that creed—slavery, concubinage, polygamy—are inconsistent with any true progress. For the recognised **position of woman** in Islam is after all by itself sufficient to condemn the whole system. It means utter rottenness at the very core of society.

If it be claimed that Mahomedanism discourages **drunkenness**, even that evil, serious as it is, is less vital than the one just mentioned. And if we may judge by the Soudan—Islam's most successful mission-field to-day, where, if anywhere, it should be making itself felt as an elevating and civilising influence—the best authorities tell us of its failure in this as in other social efforts; its open championship of the slave-trade tending to general disintegration and degradation.

That Mahomedanism and culture have existed side by side, no student of the *Arabian Nights* or of the philosophy of the Middle Ages would deny. But apparently the fostering of culture by the mediæval Caliphs was in inverse ratio to their own orthodoxy. Their creed leads logically, as we see to-day, to intellectual as well as to political stagnation.

(3) Thirdly, we come to the most important consideration. What is to be said of Islam as a satisfactory religion? Historically, there seems to be no doubt that it is made up of the fringes—the 'cast clouts'—of Judaism and Christianity. It believes these latter religions to be defective rather than positively false. The more refined Mahomedans in Zanzibar taunt the Christian missionaries with ignorance. They themselves have reached a further stage, beyond the teaching of the Prophet Jesus, and have nothing, they say, to learn from the Christians! To do Islam justice it has got hold of the central truth of Judaism, the unity and universal sovereignty of God. But the God of Islam is not the 'Righteous and Merciful' of the Old Testament: only an absolute and almighty despot whose decrees are inscrutable, and from whose character, in consequence, one can learn nothing of morality. Further, while the conception of the Divine Majesty is sublime, an impassable gulf is placed between the creature and the Creator. There is in Islam no Incarnation, and hence the doctrines of redemption, mediation, adoption to sonship, find no place in its system. There are no adequate 'means of grace'; a fact which may be in part responsible for the lowness of its moral ideal. Islam fails to satisfy the heart's yearnings for communion with a truly personal God. Its theological outcome is simply awe and submission, not loving intercourse. When Moslems have sought for a sense of loving intercourse with God, they have shown a marked tendency to adopt a Pantheistic and non-Moslem idea of God. This has been especially true in the case of the Persian mystics, whose doctrine of God is not Semitic but akin to Hindu Pantheism.

Finally, as a religion, it fails to adapt itself, except

within very narrow limits, to the various circumstances which succeeding ages bring forth, and that because it is in its essence inflexible, inexpansive, being founded on a Book, not on a Life. It blights, as we have seen, the regions where it passes, except here and there where it finds a soil to sprout in similar to that in which it was first planted nearly fourteen centuries ago.

(*d*) JUDAISM

Unique Relation of Judaism to Christianity.—So far we have been considering the claims of Buddhism and Mahomedanism as rivals to Christianity. Judaism stands on a different level. There is probably no close historical connection between Buddhism and Christianity, though in the centuries that have followed the rise of Christianity, Christian elements may have been interpolated into Buddhist literature and ritual.

Again, as regards Mahomedanism, its historical connection with Christianity lies in the fact that Mahomed directly or indirectly borrowed certain elements of Christian thought and practice, while definitely opposing himself to Christianity as a system.

But Judaism is the legitimate ancestor of Christianity. No honest student of the New Testament can fail to observe that its roots are struck deep in the Old Testament—that Christ came, as He said, 'not to destroy but to fulfil' the Law and the Prophets (S. Matt. v. 17). Such being the case, it is natural that Christianity should view the Jewish religion as inadequate and not as false. It will be claimed that Judaism is on the right lines, and fails only in that it lacks completeness; that it is itself the embodiment of a supernatural revelation about God and man; that in the Hebrew religion we have, up to a certain point, though not completely, the complement of natural religion, the answer to the needs and unspoken questions of the human heart.

It would of course be impossible to give here a full *rationale* of the Old Testament religion, but happily the main facts are familiar to all, even though their significance be not realised. Two or three considerations

may be suggested, which may help to make clear the uniqueness and the permanent value of the teaching of the Old Testament.

The unique character of the Hebrew religion becomes clear if we compare it with the pagan religions of the ancient world, and more particularly with those of the kindred Semitic tribes. This is true alike of its conception of God, His character and His demands, and of its doctrine of Man, his duties and his destiny. A further feature which distinguishes it from all its contemporaries is the steady progress which marks the development of its teaching, and the constant forward-looking tendency with which we are familiar under the name of the 'Messianic Hope.' We shall deal with each of these features briefly in turn.

1. *Doctrine of God*

In the case of the Hebrew people we have before us the unique phenomenon of a religion really and deeply Monotheistic. Its watchword is 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord' (Deut. vi. 4).

Monotheistic language is of course very familiar to us to-day, and we fail very often to realise that all of the strictly Monotheistic religions of the present age—Christianity and Islam as well as modern Judaism—owe this element to the ancient religion of the Hebrews.

We are told indeed that there are traces remaining in the Hebrew language (as *e.g.* in the *plural* form of the ordinary word for God—Elohim) of a former condition of Polytheism. Moreover the Old Testament itself asserts (Jos. xxiv. 2) that the immediate ancestors of the Israelites were idolaters. But the fact stands out quite clearly that there is no other discoverable instance in the history of religion, of a genuine Monotheism having developed out of Polytheism.

Whether we hold that the Monotheism characteristic of Judaism had as its ancestor (as the Bible seems to suggest) a primitive, undeveloped Monotheism — degraded and overlaid with idolatry—or that it represents an evolution of Monotheism from an earlier Polytheism,

the phenomenon is equally unique and inexplicable in the light of the general tendency of the religions of the world. Its own account of itself is that it represents a divine revelation. Will any other account adequately explain the facts?

We spoke above of the contrast between the Hebrew theology and that of the contemporary pagan nations. A most striking illustration of this is to be found in the early narratives of Genesis. The Biblical accounts of the Creation and the Flood bear an exceedingly close resemblance in general outline and in many details of expression, to those of the ancient Babylonians. So marked indeed are the resemblances that it is now generally admitted that there must be some definite historical relationship between them. Whether this is adequately explained or not by the Hebrew tradition that Abraham came from Mesopotamia is a question with which we are not now concerned. What does concern us is to note that the resemblances between these two narratives are associated with still more striking contrasts. In their theological presuppositions they differ *toto cœlo*. The Babylonian tradition is saturated in a spirit of Polytheism with all its fantastic puerilities. The Hebrew story stands out as the clearest possible presentation of the eternal unity and transcendence of the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe.

If we take the Biblical account at its own valuation, this contrast represents the interval between what fallen man can devise of himself, without direct revelation, and what he can do—still limited in a hundred ways by the conditions of mortal existence, but—illumined with the light of divine inspiration.

Permanent Value of Old Testament Theology.—The Monotheistic doctrine of the Old Testament is expressed, of course, in language artless and unphilosophical. The teaching was addressed to a race not naturally metaphysical (as were *e.g.* the ancient Greeks, and to some extent the races of India). Much of it was addressed to a people in their religious as well as their national infancy; and it is clothed throughout in a dress that bears the marks of its Eastern and Semitic origin—

graphic, poetical, anthropomorphic. And yet its teaching is for all time: for the philosopher as well as for the pious enthusiast.

Philosophy can find no rest short of unity. This comes out clearly in the history of Greek and Roman thought. The Polytheism in which ordinary folk endeavoured to find the satisfaction of their religious instincts was found, by those who thought more deeply, quite inadequate as an explanation of the origin and meaning of the universe. Plato and Aristotle and their successors mention the gods of the Hellenic Pantheon, and many of them conformed occasionally to the traditional rites. But while in connection with outward observances and in conformity to general usages they uttered the names of Zeus, Apollo, Æsculapius, etc., the God of their philosophy was one and one only—the abstract principle of unity in virtue of which the world is a universe.

The Hebrew mind, as we have said, was not metaphysical like the Greek. It moves about most naturally in the region of the concrete, and it is not until we come to the later books of the Old Testament (as Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes) and the Apocrypha that we get any marked philosophical features in their point of view. And yet from the first and in the forefront of the Hebrew religion we find this doctrine of the Absolute Unity of the Godhead—God is living, personal; but God is One. Socrates, a martyr to the truth as revealed in his own conscience, looked forward to meeting the great and good men of old in the world beyond the grave. May we not picture him there as meeting the writer of the first chapter of Genesis, and finding a fuller solution than he had ever dreamed of, of his ever-recurring problem of 'the One and the Many'? For just as the first chapter of S. John's Gospel meets by anticipation all the great characteristic heresies about the person of Christ, so the first chapter of Genesis—as *e.g.* Delitzsch's commentary shows—contradicts by implication all the elementary errors into which man is liable to fall concerning the Being of God.

But while the Old Testament theology satisfies the

philosophic demand for unity, it goes much further. An abstract principle of unity cannot be the subject of religion, the object of worship, or the ideal for imitation. The God of the Hebrews is all this. A living, personal Being, embodying the perfection of moral character; a holiness, a goodness as absolute as His power. One whose 'thoughts are higher than' man's thoughts as the heavens are higher than the earth (Isa. lv. 9), yet having this analogy with man, that the latter was created in His image and after His likeness (Gen. i. 26, 27). His perfect moral character (Ex. xxxiv. 6) is not only a guarantee that justice rules the universe (Gen. xviii. 25) but is also the norm or standard to which human character must strive to conform (Lev. xi. 44).

From first to last, from the Mosaic nucleus which the most critical writers admit, down to the developed religion of the later prophets, and the narrow and decadent Judaism of the time of Christ, this doctrine of the absolute unity of the living, personal God is the central doctrine of the Hebrew religion. Its logical outcome was not indeed always realised. It seems to have been only gradually that the mass of the people came to understand the vital difference between their God, Jehovah, and the tribal gods of their neighbours, and only gradually that the greater of them fully realised in a practical way that His kingship extended over all the Gentile world as truly as over Israel. But in the doctrine of the Creator, with which the Book of Genesis opens, is implicitly involved all of sovereignty over Nature and History that the subsequent development of Old Testament theology brings out.

The lofty, spiritual conception of the Deity which the Old Testament embodies has many other sides which might well serve to emphasise the distinction between Judaism and all other religions of the ancient world. But we must now pass on to the doctrine of Man.

2. *Doctrine of Man* (*Anthropology*)

(*a*) **Its close connection with theology.**—Man, according to the Hebrew religion, is created 'in the image' of God (Gen. i. 26, 27), and is capable of communion with

Him. This communion (in which his true life lies, Ps. xvi. 11) has been broken by sin, but can be restored by atonement. The sacrificial system of the Hebrews embodies the Old Testament idea of atonement. Here again we reach a point of striking contact and contrast between Hebraism and its neighbours. Sacrifice is an institution as old, apparently, and as widespread as the human race itself, and was a great feature of all Semitic religions. But the teaching of the Hebrew sacrificial system is vastly different from that of any other. It is elaborately planned to teach the importance of a right relation with God, the difficulty of access, in view of human sin and impurity, and the demands upon man involved in the attempt to regain the privilege of access. The teaching of the sacrificial system is further illumined by the utterances of prophet and psalmist, who emphasise the inner and spiritual as distinct from the outer and ritual aspect of penitence, atonement, and communion. Man's true good is shown to lie in unreserved allegiance and loving obedience to God, and in that imitation of God's holiness (Lev. xi. 44) which is possible in its degree for man, but only because God graciously makes it so.

The moral teaching of the Old Testament is thus bound up with its theology. Moral evil is branded as 'sin' because it is consistently regarded in its effect upon man's relation to the all-holy God. Theology supplies to man at once a *sanction* and an *ideal* of morality. In departing from rectitude man is setting his face against the Almighty Judge and Ruler of the universe: in repenting and following the dictates of conscience he not only is restored to Divine favour, but also places himself within the strengthening influence of actual communion.

Again, in God as progressively revealed to him, he has an ideal for imitation. This is most clearly stated in Lev. xi. 44: 'Be ye holy for I am holy,' but is involved in the whole conception of man's original creation, and of the Fatherhood of God; and underlies the lofty moral teaching of the prophets, whose preachings of repentance and calls to a higher level of morality are consistently based on the revealed character of Jehovah.

(*b*) **Uniqueness contrasted with the moral effects of other religions.**—In the morality it inculcates, as in its theology, Judaism is unique. There has been one system at least—Buddhism—replete with moral maxims of the highest beauty, such as might be placed side by side with many of the most treasured ethical maxims of the Bible. But the Buddhist morality, as we have seen above (p. 57 *sq.*), is of so negative a tendency as to be scarcely morality at all in the strict sense, leading as it does to the annihilation rather than the perfect development of character.

There have been philosophers—notably the Stoics—who have inculcated a stern rectitude of conduct: but this again of a prevailingly negative character, and without any religious sanction to give it vitality.

The religions of the ancient world in general, and particularly the Semitic religions, exercised a positively baneful influence upon character. The Psalmist's cry about idolaters, 'they that make them are like unto them,' may be inverted, and we may see in the tribal gods of the Semites and other ancient races an apotheosis of the tribal character with all its imperfections as well as its virtues. It is the glory of the Hebrew religion that its recognised exponents utterly repudiated such a doctrine. If '*Be ye holy for I am holy*' (Lev. xi. 44) is the central doctrine of the priestly element in the Old Testament, '*You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities*' (Amos iii. 2) is the characteristic message of the prophets. The general and progressively clearer teaching, alike of history and of prophecy in the Old Testament, is that while Jehovah is the special protector of His chosen people, He is also their chastiser and their judge. And though His punishments (like those attributed to the heathen gods) are meted out for disloyalty to Him, this disloyalty is found not so much in the region of ritual and ceremonial (important as that is in its way) as in that of *character*—the inner spirit of justice, mercy, and social morality in general: '*To obey is better than sacrifice*' (1 Sam. xv. 22); '*I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings*' (Hos. vi. 6).

In striking contrast, then, to the 'religious' influence of the surrounding nations, which indeed formed a constant temptation and source of degradation to the Hebrew people, their own religion is clearly one that 'makes for righteousness.' All down the ages its great teachers preach a morality both pure and strong; *pure* against the background of unnameable immoralities sanctioned and encouraged by the cults of its Semitic neighbours; *strong* in contrast to the passive and ineffective ethics of Buddhism and of ancient philosophy. Boldly recognising the fact of evil, finding its seat in desire, the Old Testament sets itself to overcome evil by positive amendment of life.

3. *Progressive Character*

A third feature of the Hebrew religion which distinguishes it from other religions of the ancient world is its progressive character. The modern reading of Old Testament history brings this out most clearly, relegating much of the detail of the Law, with its wonderful symbolism, to a date subsequent to the age of the great prophets. But any intelligent study of the Old Testament, whether on critical or on conservative lines, will show that there was a gradual progress in the Revelation, a progress from the implicit to the explicit; that the course of history and the inspired utterances of prophecy progressively enriched and ennobled the ideas of the Hebrews about God, about the range of His practical sovereignty, about the duties which He requires from Man here, and the high destiny which He has in store for him hereafter. True, the development is not completed, the revelation leaves important points vague or unexplained—points, *e.g.*, connected with future life, the problems of evil, the forgiveness of deliberate sin, and even the doctrine of the being of God. Of these more may be said later on.

The Christian accounts for this incompleteness by saying that 'the Law made nothing perfect' (Heb. vii. 19), but the Gospel fulfils the Law.

It may be admitted that in all cults and systems of thought, however inadequate or false, there can be

traced as years go on a development of a kind—an evolution, usually, of the more complex out of the simpler original. And any system that is to retain or increase its hold on a section of mankind must of course to some extent adjust itself progressively to the needs and tastes of succeeding generations.

But no instance, surely, can be adduced parallel to this of the Old Testament religion, in the steady progress it presents—the religion (as distinct from the actual conduct of its average professors) advancing ever in the richness and spirituality of its theology, as in the depth and breadth of its ethical teaching.

At the very heart and centre of this progressiveness lies the remarkable phenomenon known as 'the Messianic Hope.'

The Messianic Hope.—The poetry and mythology of ancient nations has its eyes fixed on some golden age, some heroic era in the past: and so its general tone is one of regret rather than of hope. The Hebrews, on the contrary, looked forward. They had their heroic ages of history, their Moses, their David, their Elijah: but their constant gaze was directed to the future, when was promised to them an era of which the golden age of David was but a figure and a type. The ideal son of David was to come, and reign for ever in peace and righteousness: a prophet 'like unto Moses' was expected in the future, and the stirring personality of an Elijah should usher in the Messianic kingdom.

In Messianic prophecy we have a phenomenon wonderful indeed in itself—in its irrepressible and growing conviction in spite of disappointment and hope deferred. But still more wonderful is it in its many-sided and startling fulfilment in Jesus Christ. It may well be that this subject of prophecy and fulfilment has been crudely and unscientifically treated in the past. But apart from all details of interpretation, the elaborate fulfilment, in actual fact, of these variously expressed and ancient hopes, is a problem which must simply be given up as inexplicable, unless we are prepared to see something expressly supernatural in the ordering of Hebrew literature and history.

The fulfilment, when all deductions have been made, is too comprehensive and too many-sided to be explicable as the result of mere coincidence or of an ordinary process of development.

Modern Judaism.—We have concerned ourselves naturally with the Old Testament itself, as being the recognised authoritative fountain of Judaistic doctrine. It may be well perhaps to add a few words on the subject of modern Judaism. Judaism of the conservative type need not detain us, because it clings to a more or less literal interpretation of the Scriptures, and its witness is therefore, so far as it goes, that of the Old Testament itself—a witness to a Revelation true but incomplete.

But there is a liberal school of Judaism to-day that has ceased to expect a personal Messiah, and bases its hopes exclusively on the more general teaching of those passages which describe the glories of a 'Messianic Age.' The figure of the Messiah, Son of David, is by these regarded as nothing more than a personification of the genius of true Judaism.

That there is no satisfactory alternative between this and the acceptance of the Messianic claims of Jesus Christ, we may be ready to admit; but when the prophecies are frankly compared with the facts of the Gospel, the alternatives are further reduced to one. And it is worth while to notice that the Judaism of this school, while it rejects a personal Messiah, admits an intimate and almost legitimate connection between the religion of the Old Testament and that of the New, placing 'Jesus' and 'Paul' in the series of prophets of which Abraham and Moses are the greater lights in earlier times.

4. *Summary*

Even so slight and partial a sketch of the outlines of the Old Testament teaching as has been given above will suffice to suggest the *uniqueness* of the Hebrew religion. Itself incomplete, it leaves practically nothing to be unlearned; the old statements of religious truth set out thousands of years ago remain as true as ever. The utterances of the psalmists provide a most

modern manual of devotion. The religious literature of an unphilosophical people is adapted to form the ground-work of a sublime philosophy. It has grasped the problems of morality in a way unknown to any of its contemporaries, and has made man the better (and not the worse) for his religion. Finally, it is inspired with living hope; it looks forward while all the world looks backward; it leads up in a most wonderful and complicated way to a system which supplies all that it lacks, and throws back a flood of light upon its more mysterious and enigmatic features. How are we to account for this? May we not be led to take the Old Testament on its own valuation—to pay respect to the claim advanced on almost every page of the literature, but most expressly in the Prophets? It is a great claim indeed that is voiced in the familiar words, 'Thus saith the Lord'; a claim that the views there expressed about man and his duty and destiny, and God's character and will and working are no mere human guesses at the truth, but 'inspired of God'—that they are the utterance of the Divine Word. A great claim indeed; but can the uniqueness of the phenomena be explained in any other way?

C. *The Christian Revelation*

Having briefly discussed the character and claims of the chief 'rival' religions, we now turn to consider **Christianity**. But it must be remembered that Christianity, like its ancestor Judaism, makes an *exclusive* claim. It is for the sake of argument alone that a Christian can place his Faith side by side with other beliefs as though there were really any comparison between them.

There are several different ways in which Christianity commends its claim to be *the* Religion of mankind. Apart from the testimony afforded by its intrinsic character, it commends itself—

i. By the circumstances of its origin—the Person and life of Christ;

ii. By its history from New Testament times and onwards.

With these subjects we shall deal later on (see pp. 80 *sqq.* and 102 *sqq.*).

We will now draw out shortly in a positive way the intrinsic character of some of its chief doctrines, to supplement the contrast already suggested between it and its would-be rivals. But first a word is necessary on its relation to the Hebrew religion.

1. **Relation of Christianity to Judaism.**—Briefly, it claims to complete the Old Testament system, and to be the realisation of the Messianic Hope. Judaism, as we have already hinted, is incomplete. The very character of the Old Testament literature should teach us this. It is full of unsatisfied longings and despairing cries; of unsolved problems; of deferred yet unconquerable hopes. The New Testament comprises many different species of literature, but its tone is throughout more full of calm assurance. It contains no Book of Job, no Psalms of despondent pleading, no grim Ecclesiastes. But the Old Testament does not fulfil its own promise. It supplies us with a doctrine of *Creation* and of *God* in which we recognise something of unerring truth and of finality; but it leaves us with a mysterious problem at the very heart of all existence—How can God be living and personal and yet absolutely One? How can a 'personal life' be conceived as going on from all eternity ere yet the world was? It leaves us again with very little light upon the future. The thought of a **future life** seems to have dawned upon the Old Testament writers from two directions—partly it was an inevitable protest of conscience against the injustices and inequalities of the present life. If the 'Judge of all the earth' be righteous, this cannot be all. There must be some redressing of the balance beyond the grave. Partly it was an instinctive inference from the consciousness of communion with the eternal. Christ sums up this aspect of the hope of immortality when He says that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is not a God of the dead but of the living; and that 'all live unto Him' (S. Luke xx. 38).

The New Testament answers to these problems are to be found respectively in the Christian doctrine of the

Blessed **Trinity in Unity**, and in the hopes and convictions which centre in the **Resurrection of our Lord.**

But the old covenant failed not only to give *light*: it failed also to supply the practical *help* that man requires for his religious life—cleansing and strength; remission of sins, and the power of a new life. One of the most prominent lessons of the Levitical system is the necessity and the possibility of atonement. Yet though a New Testament writer be first to proclaim in so many words the impossibility of the blood of bulls and goats actually taking away sin (Heb. x. 4), there are many hints alike in Prophet and Psalmist that lead up to that conviction. And nothing is more pathetic than the consideration of the very limited range of the atonements of the Levitical law. We are apt to forget that *all deliberate, wilful sin* was expressly excluded from their scope.

Once more, with all its grand and divine ideals, Judaism failed, because it could not supply the divine power necessary for their fulfilment.

These failures, again, of the Law are redressed in the Gospel, by the Christian Atonement and the ministry of grace that flows therefrom.

In dwelling briefly upon some of these characteristics of the Christian religion, we may be able to appreciate better the point of the contrast enunciated in those memorable words: 'The Law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ' (S. John i. 17).

2. **Intrinsic Character of Christianity.**—The message of Christianity comprises both **Truth** and **Grace.** Each of these elements is important for our purpose, for while the Christian *theology* may be easily shown to surpass its rivals, forming a logical completion of that Old Testament theology which, as we have seen, was the unique satisfactory theology known to the ancient world, it is in the matter of *practical effect* upon conduct and upon character that the rival religions most confessedly fail; and this is the sphere where that supernatural help called Divine Grace most obviously tells.

Christianity as Truth.—*The doctrine of God* in the Christian system, *i.e.* of the Blessed Trinity in Unity,

though at first sight it seems more difficult to hold than the doctrine of the Old Testament, and, in some ways, more difficult than the Polytheism of the different heathen religions, as a matter of fact solves otherwise insoluble problems. Polytheism is philosophically impossible, but the truth which underlies it, *i.e.* the principle of a diversity in the Unity, is found in the Christian doctrine.

On the other hand, the abstract unity called 'Being,' which is, so to speak, the God of philosophy, does not answer to man's need of a God: with an abstraction you can have no personal relations.

Again, the uni-personal God of Islam, of the modern Unitarian and other sects, and in a sense of the Old Testament as understood by the Jews, involves almost equal difficulties. How are we to conceive of a single, and, so to speak, barren personal Being living a really personal life from all eternity?

The doctrine of Man.—Christianity in this, as in its theology, only developing what was latent in the Old Testament, takes man as he really is, good and bad in one. The doctrine of '**original sin**' expresses a scientific fact concerning human nature as no other system succeeds in expressing it. Its doctrine of man's creation in the **image of God**, and of the possibility of the renewal of that image, tallies with the equally scientific fact of the existence of the sublimest aspirations and yearnings, and is borne out quite sufficiently, though not of course completely, by the phenomena which we know as conversion and growth in grace.

The Incarnation links Truth and Grace.—One essential point in which Christianity differs from all other religions is its relation to its Founder. Christianity is not simply a following the precepts of Christ, or even an imitation of His life. These things it involves, but much more also. It is in its essence a *vital union* with Him, a participation in His very life, and thereby in the Divine Nature. The central truth of Christianity is the INCARNATION, whereby God meets His creation, and is able to work in it a re-creation such as it needs because of sin. The doctrine of the Incarnation is thus the meeting-point of truth and grace.

Christ claims (S. John xiv. 6) to be 'the Truth and the Life.' As *Truth* He exhibits in His own divine-human personality a picture of what God is and of what man should be. But He does not leave us impotent in the presence of a perfect but an unattainable ideal. He is also the Life, come that we may 'have life . . . more abundantly' (S. John x. 10). He furnishes, by union with Himself, the power to reach the ideal.

Here, as elsewhere, we find Christianity supplying what pagan religions had been groping after. The grotesque and immoral myths of incarnation found in classical and other religions, *e.g.* the Indian of to-day, express at least this, that there was the idea and the longing in human nature for such commerce between heaven and earth as an incarnation alone could supply. The historical fact of the Incarnation, which is the foundation of the Christian religion, supplies, of course, far more than the pagans ever dreamt of: its practical effect upon us may be treated under the head of Grace.

Christianity as 'Grace.'—The 'rival' religions fail practically in moral dynamic.

We have seen how *Buddhism*, in spite of its high moral precepts, fails really—as Indian religions in general fail—to touch morality.

Islam contents itself with a narrow, crude, and one-sided standard, as though realising that it could supply none of the necessary moral force to help man in his highest aspirations.

Judaism, in the religion of the Old Testament, had set for it a standard very high indeed, though capable of amendment, as is shown by the Sermon on the Mount. But it lacked adequate, accessible means of recovery after failure; and the divine power that was in it of developing human character to a greater height than had yet been reached by humanity in history, is largely to be attributed to the Messianic Hope, which is the most striking feature of the Hebrew race.

S. Paul, 'a Pharisee of the Pharisees' by education, when he looks back upon the Old Testament dispensation in the light of the Gospel, regards it as, to him, the instrument of death rather than of life (Romans v., vi.).

Christianity not only sets a higher standard than any other that has been set, in the example and precepts of its Founder, but it also claims to give men the power of attaining that standard, and that not by externally working upon their feelings, but by the infusion of supernatural power within.

One further point may be adduced as an instance of the way in which the Christian doctrine incidentally supplies important deficiencies in natural religion:—that of the Fatherly Love of God.

It is often said that natural religion without any recourse to Revelation leads us up to the thought of a Being infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness; but though the study of Nature may lead us up to the idea of a 'good' God, in spite of many difficulties, yet this goodness can hardly amount, in its relation to us, to more than the extreme of beneficence or bountifulness. We recognise, however, that human nature itself exhibits a quality far higher than that, viz., self-sacrificing love.

Now it is impossible, as we have already observed (p. 24), to conceive antecedently how an infinitely resourceful God could have occasion to exercise self-sacrifice. The creation of the universe, with all its wealth of the material and spiritual, cannot have cost Him anything.

In the Christian doctrine of the Atonement, in God's scheme of Redemption as recorded in the Bible, we find a solution of this question, how God—being what He is—can show Himself unmistakably and to the uttermost our Father. The answer is given in S. John iii. 16:—

'SO GOD LOVED THE WORLD.'

PART II: JESUS CHRIST

CHAPTER IV

THE CHRIST OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTORY, 80, 81.

I. THE GOSPEL PORTRAIT OF CHRIST: its value independent of strictly historical evidence, pp. 81-84.
   1. Harmony of apparently incompatible elements.
   2. The uniqueness of the character; which yet is capable of world-wide reproduction.
   3. The Catholic Human Character.

II. THE HISTORIC CHRIST, pp. 84-88.
   1. Witness of the Gospels.
   2. Witness of the Epistles.

Introductory.—So far we have touched upon Christianity as a system supplying at once the religious truth that man has ever been groping after, and the moral dynamic which alone can raise him from his fallen condition. We have found it in both respects, but especially in the latter, triumphantly successful where all others have failed—Natural Religion, Polytheistic Paganism, Buddhism, Islam, and even Judaism.

We saw how the central point of the Christian system is Christ Himself, God Incarnate. And it is the person and character and claims of Christ that now claim our attention. Their importance is fully recognised in the present day. Indeed many recent Christian apologists have deliberately confined themselves to this one

subject, making the area of their defence conterminous with the bounds of the second and largest of the three paragraphs of the Creed.

We have chosen a somewhat larger area, and in consequence have been unable to do more than touch lightly upon many important matters.

But it is not unimportant to remember that the Christian doctrine of the Person of Christ carries us back (in the prologue to S. John's Gospel and several passages of S. Paul's Epistles) to the creation of the world, and carries us forward also through all intervening history to the present, and on to the end of time. Christ's work, as we shall see, did not end when He ascended. The third paragraph of the Creed, in sketching the work of the Holy Spirit and the Church, is describing the energies of the Ascended Christ; and these supply no mean contribution to the sum of Christian evidence.

In the present chapter we shall consider first the evidence furnished by the *intrinsic character* of Christ, as described in the Gospels, apart from all *historical* questions. We shall then consider the evidence from a more strictly historical point of view, devoting the following chapter to the crucial point of the Resurrection.

I. **The Gospel portrait of Christ**: its value independent of any strictly historical evidence.

We Westerns lay much stress on historical argument, but to half the world the central evidence of the truth of Christianity might lie rather in the character of the portrait of Christ as drawn in the Four Gospels than in any historical or literary considerations. This is the argument of Canon Robinson (*Studies in the Character of Christ*), and it involves, as he says, no assumption: 'All we are asked to take notice of is the fact that the Four Gospels are now in existence.' Of course this line of argument leads on to the conclusion that there must have been an original corresponding to that portrait; but its main contention is that the existence of the very idea of such an one as Christ, is itself a supernatural phenomenon, and an attestation of the divine origin of that religion of which He is the centre.

1. **Harmony of apparently incompatible elements.**—The Gospel's artless narratives, so artless in fact that they do not even characterise the events or the persons they describe—narratives in some degree independent of one another—portray a Character which is confessedly the most perfect ever conceived. And that portrait is built up out of a number of separate and delicate touches, partly descriptions of act, whether miraculous or otherwise, and of gesture; partly records whether of formal teaching or of conversation. Yet the character itself described, as it were, so incidentally, possesses perfect unity; and within this unity, it is further to be noted, we get a combination of seemingly incompatible attributes, *e.g.* a childlike humility with the loftiest claims, a sympathy with the smallest details of life, together with the consciousness of being intrusted with an universal mission; an almost unearthly dignity and an entire lack of excitement or haste, combined with the consciousness that His message had been rejected; teaching confessedly original alike from a Jewish and heathen standpoint, combined with the narrowest and least inspiring surroundings; finally, unequalled courage combined with a meekness then universally associated with cowardice and weakness.

2. **The character of Christ is unique yet reproducible and of world-wide application.**—So far we have been considering the harmony of apparently incompatible elements in the character of the Christ of the Gospels: we now go on to observe that this unique character is reproducible. The result we saw was not a monstrous and unnatural compound, but a character sweet and gracious beyond all that have ever been conceived, the most human of all human characters, while yet something beyond. Being so many-sided and so perfectly balanced, so absolutely unconfined by limits of age and race, it forms a model for humanity of every type. S. Paul saw the vision of Christ on the road to Damascus, and ever after, it was his life's ambition to reproduce the character of Christ in himself and others. And with what marvellous success he achieved this, no sympathetic student of S. Paul can fail to see. The ideal is exacting, and actual success will be impossible if man is left to himself to

copy it, but as regards its applicability to all, its very perfection is what ensures that. Mission work may involve many failures, as indeed many failures characterise the Christian lives of those who are Christians by inheritance, but missions have at least proved this: that the *imitatio Christi* is equally appropriate to the Hindu, the Japanese, or the Negro of to-day, as it was to S. Paul and his comrades; and that each becomes capable of the best development in his own line if this model be set before him.

3. Surely it is because the character of Christ is not a Semitic character, a Jewish character, or a character belonging to the first century of our era, but **the catholic human character**: and as such it satisfies everywhere the deepest human needs and aspirations. This is not a merely subjective or sentimental view; it rests on history, and is corroborated by the consideration that the deeper the needs and the more intensely they are felt, the less is one ready to rest in anything that is not in the fullest sense satisfactory.

The phenomena of what we call Messianic prophecy, regarded even apart from the question of inspiration, throw additional light on the way in which Christ's character fulfils the needs and aspirations of humanity. Any thinking person will probably admit that these prophets show at least an unusual insight into the needs of humanity, and that this is one of the chief points in which they may be said to stand a head and shoulders above their contemporaries. To this we may add that it is also one of the most important ways in which they may be said 'to speak of Christ.' Even if there were nothing more mysterious in 'predictive prophecy' than that insight, if it could be shown that all their prophecies had reference to their own age, and were in some sense fulfilled in their own age, it would still remain a most remarkable fact that in Christ is found embodied that which millions of intelligent people have been constrained to interpret as the 'literal fulfilment' of so many different and apparently incompatible predictions.

Is not this at least part of the explanation: that the character is so uniquely all-embracing and soul-satisfying,

so indisputably that of perfect man, the climax of human possibilities?

It satisfies all human needs and yearnings, whether explicit or implicit, whether outspoken or only half-realised, whether left for ages in unalleviated hunger, or partially and progressively satisfied from time to time.

We may go on further and say that Christ's character not only meets our felt yearnings, but, as missionary work has shown again and again, reveals needs not felt before, and by their satisfaction raises humanity to heights undreamed of.

The inventor of such a character would be a greater wonder than the hero himself.—'No testimony,' says Hume, 'is sufficient to establish a miracle unless the testimony be of such a kind that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish.'

May we not fairly plead that the Gospel-portrait of Christ fulfils Hume's conditions?

II. **The Historic Christ.**—The fact that this unique personality, at once real and supernatural, lived and wrought and taught and died and rose again at a definite period in the world's history is attested by evidence equal to or greater than the evidence on which generally accepted facts of secular history are based. The battle of Marathon, for instance, is accepted on the simple testimony of Herodotus: it is one of the turning-points of the world's history, and considered barely by itself would seem *à priori* incredible. The truth is that the testimony as far as it goes is reliable, and the event fits into its place in history; its memory is continuously handed down from the time of Herodotus, and the event itself has left its mark in history.

But its mark is as nothing compared with that which the life of Christ and His Resurrection have made. And the original testimony to the fact of the battle of Marathon, if equally or nearly as contemporary in character, is by no means so full or so complicated.

The Gospels were written by men who were contemporary with most of the events which they record (they are

dated by Dr. Sanday, the first three Gospels *c.* 60-80 A.D., and the Fourth Gospel *c.* 90 A.D.), and their evidence is enforced and corroborated by a set of documents, some of which are earlier still—the Epistles, especially the Pauline Epistles (*c.* 52-67 A.D.). These Epistles certainly record for us what the first Christians thought of Christ.

While the record of Christ's life and words is important in itself, blending as it does the natural and supernatural, a special interest attaches to it in its relation to what had gone before. On the one hand, we are impressed with the impossibility that such a life should spring by a natural evolution from the human stock of that time and place. On the other, we cannot fail to notice the marvellous way—yet a way quite contrary to that expected by His contemporaries—in which it fulfils the inspired hopes and yearnings embodied in the Old Testament.

Of this point—in which culminates the witness of the Old Testament—we treated above, when we were considering the 'Messianic Hope' (pp. 72 and 83) and the relation of Judaism to Christianity. We shall now summarise very briefly the witness of the **Gospels** and that of the **Epistles** to the Divine-Human character of Christ, at once natural and supernatural, and on both sides strictly *historical*: a fact the importance of which the Creeds seem to emphasise in the clause 'Suffered *under Pontius Pilate.*'

1. The Witness of the Gospels.

a. Christ is no ordinary man.
b. Christ is the pattern man.
c. Christ is historical.

a. Not only does His catholic character transcend the possibilities of ordinary evolution, but in Him as presented in the Gospels the natural and supernatural are mixed up in a marvellous and indissoluble union. This is clear when we consider His claims, *e.g.*, the claim in the Sermon on the Mount to amend the Law which both He and His hearers certainly held to have been given by God Himself; or the claim to give rest to all the weary and heavy-laden; or the claim advanced in S. Matt. xxv.

to be Judge of all mankind at the last day. It is clear when we consider His miracles, and see the supremely human touch of considerate pity and compassion transfigured into a mighty, vivifying power, by a mysterious something that transcends even the wonderful discoveries of our present age in regard to the power of Mind over Mind and over Matter. In Him, as we said above (p. 52), the supernatural seems natural. Miracle streams forth from the Christ of the Gospels like an irresistible current from a fountain-head. There is nothing about it of the portentous or magical, as in the Christ of apocryphal literature.

b. Eminent unbelievers have put on record the strongest possible testimonies to the effect that Christ is the pattern man. These testimonies are presumably the result of a candid study of the Gospels, and possibly of the effect of those Gospels upon believers. But further, Christ *claims* to be the pattern man: He bids us take His yoke upon us, and learn of Him, and promises rest unto our souls (S. Matt. xi. 29); He calls Himself the Light of the World (S. John, viii. 12); He claims to be sinless (S. John viii. 46). He claims to be master, lord, example, to His disciples (S. John xiii. 13-15); to be 'the way, the truth, and the life' (S. John xiv. 6).

c. The Gospels represent this character not as a divine idea, nor as any non-human personage, but as one who was born at Bethlehem of Judæa, in the days of Herod the king, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate. That Christ actually lived and died at a certain period in history there can be no manner of doubt; and unless the Gospel narrative is to be arbitrarily mutilated, it must be admitted that in this historical personage we have a phenomenon utterly inexplicable by ordinary natural laws of human development.

The most straightforward and satisfactory explanation of what the Gospels tell us, and tell us so frankly, simply, and consistently, is that the Christ they speak of was both human and divine.

2. **Witness of the Epistles.**—The Christ presented to us here is both human and divine; and the Epistles

represent what the first generation of Christians 'thought of Christ.'

If we take the four practically undisputed Epistles of S. Paul, *i.e.* Romans, Galatians, and First and Second Corinthians, we can construct from them a full creed of the Incarnation—almost as full as the third part of the Te Deum.

We may put this under five heads. The first Christians thought of Christ—

(1) That He was a divine being; the Jewish Messiah and the Son of God. That before His Incarnation He had shared with God a divine existence (Gal. iv. 4; 2 Cor. v. 18-21; 1 Cor. viii. 6, x. 4, 9).

(2) That though Incarnate, He was sinless (Rom. viii. 2; 2 Cor. v. 21).

(3) That He was crucified, but raised the third day (1 Cor. xv. 3 ff.).

(4) That His Crucifixion, ignominious as it seemed, had a far-reaching effect: He died for the sins of men (Rom. iii. 24-26; 2 Cor. v. 18-21).

(5) He will come again as Judge of all (Rom. ii. 16; 1 Cor. iv. 5; 2 Cor. v. 10).

There is no trace of evidence in these Epistles that the subjects in question were regarded as matters of controversy. Controversial subjects did come up in the Epistles, *e.g.*, the question of circumcision and obedience to the Jewish Law, the problem concerning things offered to idols, and other subjects too; but no controversy appears, and there is no trace of a shadow of doubt, about the Divinity of our Lord.

We have only dealt with a mere fragment of the witness which the various books of the New Testament could supply. It is not too much to say that every single book of the collection (with the exception perhaps of the brief private letter, Third S. John) bears its own individual testimony to a belief in the Divinity and in the Risen Life of Him who was 'crucified under Pontius Pilate'; a belief obviously held both by those who wrote and those who received the writings. The accounts given in the Gospels, though in part representing a

common oral tradition, and in part, probably, also common documentary matter, are in many particulars manifestly independent, and in unimportant details even inconsistent. But the picture of Christ which they combine to paint—both the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel—is a consistent one, and is the fulfilment of the great Old Testament ideals.

The references in the Epistles—both the four enumerated above and the other sixteen—are quite incidental, and found in very varying contexts. Yet they all harmonise together, and harmonise not only with one another, but with the Gospel-portrait, and with the Christ of the Acts and of the Apocalypse.

And it may be worth while to observe that this testimony does not depend upon a few isolated texts here and there, and so is not liable to be shaken by any unexpected results of textual criticism. Nor is it bound up with any particular solution of the 'Synoptic Problem'—the problem, that is, of the origin of the three Synoptic Gospels and their relations one to another. It rests on the evidence of a group or series of documents, *some* of which were indisputably written in the same generation that witnessed the events described, and all of which almost certainly saw the light within the first century after the birth of Christ.

There are two of the events in the Gospel story which stand out prominently above all the rest. They mark the beginning and the end of His life of humiliation—the Virgin-birth and the Resurrection. The former has been assailed from time to time since Celsus wrote his blasphemous explanation of it; but its discussion has assumed a new prominence in quite recent days. We shall reserve our remarks upon it for an Appendix (see p. 146).

The Resurrection is at once the most clearly supernatural event in the Gospels, the one that has excited most criticism on the part of unbelievers, and the one for which there is most abundant historical evidence. We propose to treat of it at some length in the ensuing chapter.

CHAPTER V

THE RISEN CHRIST

A. Evidential Importance of the Resurrection.

B. Evidence for the Resurrection.

- I. S. Paul.
- II. Other Apostles and New Testament Writers.
- III. Other Disciples (indirect).
- IV. The empty grave.
- V. Christ Himself.
- VI. The Church.

C. Alleged Defects in the New Testament Evidence.

- I. Absence of Eye-witnesses.
- II. Inconsistencies in the Account.

D. Sceptical Attempts to Account for the Belief.

- I. Thief Theory.
- II. Swoon Theory.
- III. Mythical Theory.
- IV. Vision Theory.
- V. Objective-vision Theory.

E. List of Recorded Appearances and of the Main Difficulties.

A. *The Importance of the Resurrection*

1 Cor. xv. 14: 'And if Christ be not risen . . . your faith is also vain.' From the very first the question of Christ's Resurrection has been a crucial point in Christian evidences.

It was the main evidence alleged by the Apostles in support of their belief that Christ was the Son of God Incarnate. It is the leading theme of the preaching of S. Peter and S. Paul recorded in the Acts. At Athens the substance of S. Paul's sermon is strikingly expressed in the phrase, 'Jesus and the Resurrection' (Acts xvii. 18). It is equally prominent in the Pauline Epistles (see, *e.g.*, Rom. i. 1-4 and 1 Cor. xv.).

Its importance consists largely in the light which it throws upon **Christ's claim to be Divine.** The Crucifixion if it stood alone would have seemed a final refutation of that claim; but the Resurrection of Christ, if a fact, not only annuls but actually reverses all the natural inferences from His Crucifixion, and turns a defeat into a triumph.

It further throws light on His claims made before the Crucifixion, especially on His assertion (S. John x. 18) that He was going to lay down His life of His own accord, and could take it again at His will.

Finally, if accepted as a historic fact, it removes to a very large extent the natural prejudice against the truth of the other miracles recorded of our Lord; for, *first*, it means that the miraculous or supernatural has appeared in history; and *secondly*, this particular miracle harmonises with and completes that complex system of unique words and works which is recorded for us in the Gospels.

Another consideration which shows its great practical importance is that the Christian Church, and the Christian religion in individuals, are based upon it as upon a foundation. The point which distinguishes Christianity most from all rival religions is this, that its Founder, who is also its Object, is regarded and dealt with as still living and ever-living.

B. *Evidence for the Resurrection*

The evidence may be summed up under six heads.

I. Evidence of S. Paul (direct).

II. Evidence of other Apostles and New Testament writers (direct).

III. Recorded testimony of many other disciples (indirect).
IV. Evidence of the empty grave.
V. Testimony of Christ's life before the Crucifixion.
VI. Testimony of the Church.

The first five of these we shall discuss in the present chapter; the sixth belongs rather to the third division of our subject.

I. **Evidence of S. Paul.**—(1) *He affirms that he has seen the Risen Lord* in his own account of his conversion to the Jews who mobbed him (Acts xxii.) and to Agrippa (Acts xxvi.). In 1 Cor. ix. 1 he writes, 'Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?' and 1 Cor. xv. 8, 'Last of all He appeared to me also.'

(2) *The effect on his life.*—The appearance of the Lord had a most notable effect upon him that which we commemorate as the Conversion of S. Paul. It changed the whole current of his life, and supplies at once the key to his labours and to his system of Christian thought. *The Risen Lord is the centre of Pauline theology.*

(3) S. Paul not only claims to have seen the Risen Lord himself, but records also in 1 Cor. xv. 1-8 *appearances to a number of other persons*, including (v. 6) an appearance to above five hundred at once, the majority of whom he affirms to have been living at the time he wrote.

The importance of this evidence lies in the fact that he was himself originally an enemy of Christ, and intimate with those whose interest it would have been to disprove the Resurrection-story at the first, had it been possible to do so; and that he was writing to a group of persons, keen and critical (Corinthians), many of whom denied the Resurrection.

In the latter part of 1 Cor. xv. S. Paul appeals to the intrinsic fitness of the Resurrection itself.

II. **Evidence of other Apostles and New Testament writers.**—(*a*) *S. Peter.*—We have already referred to S. Peter's sermon recorded in the early chapters of the Acts. There the Resurrection is one of the principal

themes, and is boldly and constantly adduced in the face of opponents who had the best opportunity of refuting him, and who yet seem to have produced no evidence to the contrary.

In his First Epistle the Resurrection is again prominent: cf. chaps. i. 3, 21 and iii. 18-21.

(*b*) *S. John*, in the Apocalypse, speaks of our Lord as the 'first begotten of the dead' (Rev. i. 5). The living Christ is also clearly the theme of his First Epistle, and implied in the Second.

(*c*) *All New Testament Writers.*—The same is true perhaps of all New Testament writers; if they do not dogmatically assert the doctrine of the Resurrection, they imply that Christ did die and is alive. This is especially true of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where, throughout, our Lord is both Victim and ever-living High Priest; while in Heb. xiii. 20, we read, 'The God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus.'

III. **Indirect evidence of other disciples.**—Ten different appearances of the Risen Lord, besides that to S. Paul, are recorded in the New Testament, and Acts i. 3 may refer to still more appearances without mentioning them ('to whom He shewed Himself alive,' etc.). What is important to observe in these accounts is the *variety of circumstances* in which the Risen Lord appeared—now to one or two, now to a larger body; sometimes to women, sometimes to men; sometimes to both together. Again, He appears at different times of day—early in the morning, in the afternoon, late at night.

He appears to people in *different frames of mind*: to the women affrighted, to the Apostles fearful, and then rejoicing, to S. Mary Magdalene weeping, to the disciples on their way to Emmaus sad and despondent, to the Apostles on the first Easter Day without the doubting Thomas, to the same a week later with S. Thomas present.

One frame of mind seems to be conspicuous by its absence, *i.e.* the attitude of excited expectancy. The earliest appearances at any rate are recorded as received with surprise by those who saw them, and with incredulity by those to whom they were reported.

Circumstantial evidence.—The appearances are not just momentary: He stopped and spoke with them; He walked by their side; He actually ate in their presence. Their evidence is minute and circumstantial; it is expressed calmly, simply, and seriously, the facts barely stated, without any attempt at explanation or any marks of excitement. The importance of the Resurrection was so deeply realised by those to whom these appearances were given, that they were ready to run all risks in proclaiming it. *The change wrought in their lives* (consider, *e.g.*, S. Peter's denial and subsequent courage) and their courage in face of opposition are surely enough to prove that these men were at any rate convinced that they had seen the risen and glorified Lord. Their evidence was published to the world *on the very spot where the event was said to have happened*, and practically at the very time. The *opposition* it aroused seems to show that their enemies took it seriously. We have record of only one attempt to explain it away (S. Matt. xxviii. 12-15); and in the trials of the Apostles recorded in the Acts there is no suggestion of an argument adduced on the other side, but simply a recourse to violence and a frantic desire to hush it all up.

IV. There is **the fact of the empty grave.** We may see in connection with S. Matt. xxviii. 12-15, what a stumbling-block this was to our Lord's enemies. It is not denied that the body of the Lord was buried there on the Friday night, and that the tomb was found empty early on the Sunday morning. It must then have been removed either by His friends or His enemies if the story of the Resurrection is a fraud. The first supposition implies that all the lives, and the fruits of the lives, of the Apostles were built upon an act of fraud. The second alternative at once raises the question, Why, if His enemies had possession of the corpse, did they not triumphantly produce it?

The evidence of the empty tomb is rendered more emphatic by the fact that though the body was not there, the wrappings were; and the narrative, especially as given in S. John xx. 3-10 (cf. S. Luke xxiv. 12), seems to

suggest that these wrappings lay in such a manner as to astonish those who saw them; not scattered about as though the body had been stripped of them and carried off (this Renan reads into the narrative), but lying, the head-covering and the body-covering separately, and the spices (a hundred pounds weight) unspilt; the napkin still retaining its turban-like shape as though the body had issued from them in a spiritualised form, leaving them exactly in their place. This fact has recently been emphasised in a most striking manner by Mr. Latham (see *The Risen Master*, pp. 36, 37, 46, etc.).

V. **Testimony of Christ Himself**: His life and words before crucifixion, as recorded in the Gospels. There can be no doubt that, according to the Gospel-story, Christ expected and predicted that He would both be put to death and rise from the dead after three days. These 'predictions of the Passion' form a prominent feature, especially in the First Gospel, and in our Lord's conviction as to His resurrection, they harmonise precisely with His recorded teaching about the resurrection of the righteous in general. It is this conviction surely which makes death such a different thing for Him from what it is for men in general: which makes Him look forward to His own death, not with mere terror and shrinking, not as an end of work and a release from labour, but rather as an important step in the development of His continuing work for the kingdom of God upon earth. His own clearness of conviction on this point is in striking contrast to the ideas of His disciples, who are represented as oblivious of these predictions of His, and very slow to believe that He had really risen.

VI. **Testimony of the Church.**—The rise and continued existence and growth of the Christian Church, which is built up upon a belief in—or one might say, upon the *fact* of—the Resurrection, forms a distinct head of evidence, which will be treated of in a subsequent chapter.

C. *Alleged Defects in the New Testament Evidence*

These are two: (1) It is pointed out that there are no recorded eye-witnesses of the actual process of the Resurrection.

(2) The inconsistency of the different accounts of our Lord's appearances is dwelt on.

I. **The Absence of Eye-witnesses.**—(*a*) There may be very good reasons why no one should have been allowed to see the Resurrection—the fact, if it be a fact, is admittedly unique. According to a very probable view of what took place, based upon the position of the garments, there would have been nothing to be seen except the disappearance of the body. In any case, the Roman soldiers, who alone were likely to have witnessed it, are said to have been overwhelmed by the accompanying phenomena (S. Matt. xxviii. 4).

(*b*) In any similar case, *e.g.*, of the reappearance of a friend after a journey, we should not require any eye-witnesses of the process of return. The point is that the disciples recognised their Lord alive as the same who had died.

II. **The Inconsistency in the Accounts.**—Though there are difficulties that meet us in attempting to harmonise the accounts of the Risen Lord's appearances, given in our different documents, yet one thing is clear from them all—all the witnesses are undoubtedly convinced that the Risen Lord has shown Himself in this way or in that.

In accounting for the differences of detail, two considerations suggest themselves:—

(1) We must leave *room for our own ignorance*; we do not know all the facts. A number of fairly successful attempts have been made to harmonise the recorded appearances—we cannot say which, if any, is absolutely correct; but we can infer that with more knowledge most if not all of our difficulties would vanish.

(2) We must not forget that *the same facts assume a* somewhat *different appearance* in filtering through different minds, and that too when the witnesses are both

honest and intelligent, and the facts which they record substantially accurate.

A list of the recorded appearances of our Lord will be found appended to this chapter. Here it will be sufficient to summarise.

There seem to be accounts of eleven appearances, drawn partly from the Four Gospels, partly from S. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. There is also the reference in Acts i. 3, 'to whom also He shewed Himself alive,' etc., which may include all these, and possibly an indefinite number of others beside. There are various minor problems which are touched upon in the appended note, but the main difficulty is to be found, after all, in the records of the occurrences of the Resurrection-day itself. If we can show that it is possible to harmonise these in a really reasonable way, we have practically solved the problem. Now there are several ways in which this has been done without any serious violence to the Gospel narratives. We will choose the one that seems to us most satisfactory. It is that suggested by Burton and Matthews (see *Constructive Studies*, p. 159).

'All the women came to the tomb together; Mary seeing the stone rolled away waits to see no more, but runs to tell Peter and John; the other women continue on, enter the tomb, see the vision of the young man, and return and bring the disciples word; Peter and John come to the tomb, not having met the women, see the clothes lying in the tomb, and return home; Mary coming more slowly, reaches the garden, sees first the angels and then Jesus. She reports, later on, what she has seen, and is disbelieved. The other women also, perhaps returning under an impulse similar to that which drew Mary, return and are met by Jesus; while these events are happening, the two set out to Emmaus, having heard only the first report of the women and that of Peter and John, but no news of the actual epiphany of Jesus.'

The appearance to S. Peter recorded by S. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 5), and alluded to in S. Luke's Gospel (xxiv. 34), may have taken place any time after that granted to Mary; and that vouchsafed to the assembled

disciples in the evening affords no chronological problem.

We have thus tried to meet the two main objections alleged against the New Testament evidence for the Resurrection. And if we have been even moderately successful, we may surely claim that the fact of the Resurrection of Christ rests on a body of testimony enormously greater and more varied than can be adduced for any historical occurrence of that period, or indeed of any subsequent period of ancient history. And indeed opponents very generally admit that the documentary evidence does establish this at least—that there was a very early belief in the Resurrection of Christ; that in fact His first disciples in large numbers were convinced of it, or at any rate spoke and acted consistently as though this were their conviction.

D. *Attempts to Account for the Belief while Denying the Fact*

Many ingenious attempts have been made to explain away this honest conviction, the conviction of the first generation of Christians and of all subsequent generations in the Church. The desire is to account for the conviction while denying the fact. Some of these theories indeed, like that which had supposed the disciples to have stolen the body, or that which supposes that Christ never died upon the Cross, would throw the honest conviction outside the circle of the most intimate disciples. Another theory, the mythical theory, waters down the original conviction and makes the idea of the Divine Christ a gradual legendary growth.

The two forms of the vision theory are those which seem to cope with the facts least unsatisfactorily: namely the theory of Renan and Strauss, that the disciples were the victims of a series of illusions or hallucinations; and the theory of Keim, that the disciples received as it were telegrams from heaven in the form of objective visions conveying to them, in the only manner in which they were competent to receive it, the truth that their Master was still alive in the spirit world, and glorified. Either

of these vision theories would seem at first sight to account for the belief in Christ's Resurrection without compromising the honesty of those who first preached it; but they are beset by greater difficulties than the traditional theory of the Church.

I. **The Thief Theory.**—The tomb was empty. Apart from miracle, the body must have been stolen by His enemies or His friends. Obviously the enemies would have produced the body. That the disciples should have stolen it (as the Jews alleged, S. Matt. xxviii. 13) is inconsistent with the whole tenour of their lives, and the results of their labours. The theory is now practically abandoned.

II. **The Swoon Theory** (Schleiermacher).—A modern theory, that Christ did not die but swooned, and, having been revived by the spices in the tomb, counterfeited a resurrection. As Strauss points out, it involves deliberate deception on the part of One whom unbelievers recognise as the embodiment of ideal morality; and a deception which it would be practically impossible to impose, and one that is inconsistent with all the accounts we have of His alleged appearances.

III. **The Mythical Theory.**—Against this we can say that it is impossible that, between the year 30 and the year 180 A.D., when our Four Gospels were universally accepted as authoritative, a mass of ideal, mythical, or legendary matter should have been invented, which not only superseded the real facts of the history and caused them to sink into oblivion, but also transformed a purely human Jesus into the Divine Christ of our present Gospel. So much is clear, apart from any arguments as to the character, authenticity, etc., of the New Testament writings.

If we take the writings as they stand, we find it still more impossible to believe that the myth of the Resurrection had time to grow up and take shape between Good Friday and Pentecost, when it began to be proclaimed to the world.

IV. **The Vision Theory** (Renan and Strauss).—This theory attempts to account for the widespread conviction that Christ was risen, by the supposition that a number of

His disciples were the victims of hallucination—that in fact the Resurrection is based on no firmer foundation than that of imagination and nervous excitement. Renan lays great stress on the fact that Mary was the first to see it, out of whom had been cast seven devils.

The manifold inconsistencies of this theory with the Gospel have been well drawn out by Milligan (pp. 93-114). (1) It is inconsistent with the mental state of the disciples, before the manifestations. Nothing is clearer than that the expectancy and excitement required for such hallucination, was unusually absent from the minds of those who first saw Him. (2) It is inconsistent with the nature of the manifestations themselves. (3) It is inconsistent with the state of things in the Christian community after the manifestations. (4) It is inconsistent with the various subordinate circumstances that marked these manifestations:—

(α) They often lasted for a considerable time.

(β) They were often made to large numbers at the same instant.

(γ) Most of them took place not in simple, credulous Galilee, as Strauss and Renan wish, but in sceptical Jerusalem.

(δ) The visions were frequent for about six weeks and then suddenly ceased.

Keim rejects this theory on three grounds: (1) The simple, earnest, almost cold, unfamiliar character of the manifestations. (2) The speedy cessation of the appearances. (3) The entire change of the mood of the disciples within a short time, from the excited state which predisposes to visions, to clear knowledge of Christ's Messianic dignity and energetic resolves to bear witness to the world for their risen and exalted Lord. And he himself propounds in opposition to this what is known as—

V. **Keim's Theory of Objective Visions.**—It is an attempt to evade the scientific difficulty of a bodily Resurrection.

While admitting the absurdity of Renan's hallucination theory, Keim regards the Christophanies as having a certain degree of objective reality. They are not the mere creations of the excited imagination of the disciples,

but an effect deliberately and purposely impressed upon them by the glorified Christ from heaven. The one advantage of this theory is that it does not deny the supernatural. The glorified Christ is represented as interposing to work for His good purposes what might be called a psychological miracle on the disciples.

Among the disadvantages are these : (1) It does not really face the facts of the records, including the empty tomb. (2) It labours under a difficulty (absent from Renan's theory), that it introduces into the part assigned to the Saviour an element practically indistinguishable from fraud. It is not as though no other method could be conceived, of revealing to them the fact that Christ's spirit still lived; yet the recorded accounts of the Christophanies seemed deliberately planned to impress on their minds the fact that His *body* had risen from the grave. (See especially S. Luke xxiv. 39.)

E. Appearances of the Risen Christ recorded in the New Testament.

I. *On the Resurrection Day. Jerusalem and neighbourhood.*

(1) To S. Mary Magdalene, S. Mark xvi. 9-11, S. John xx. 14-18.
(2) To the women, S. Matt. xxviii. 9-10.
(3) To S. Peter, S. Luke xxiv. 34, 1 Cor. xv. 5.
(4) To Cleopas and his companion on the way to Emmaus, } S. Mark xvi. 12-13, S. Luke xxiv. 13-32.
(5) The appearance to the ten disciples, and perhaps others, in the upper room, } S. Mark xvi. 14. S. Luke xxiv. 36-43. S. John xx. 19-23. { Cf. 1 Cor. xv. 5.

II. *On Low Sunday, in the evening. Jerusalem.*

(6) To eleven Apostles, including S. Thomas, and others (probably the Blessed Virgin), } S. John xx. 26-29, (1 Cor. xv. 7)?

III. *Elsewhere.*

(7) To seven disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. } S. John xxi. 1-23.

(8*a*) On a mountain in Galilee,	S. Matt. xxviii. 16-20.
(8*b*) To five hundred at once,	1 Cor. xv. 6.
(9) To S. James,	1 Cor. xv. 7.

IV. *Near Jerusalem, forty days after First Easter.*

(10) To Apostles, and perhaps to others, just before the Ascension,	S. Mark xvi. 19-20. S. Luke xxiv. 50-53. Acts i. 6-11.

V. *Near Damascus.*

(11) To S. Paul, 1 Cor. ix. 1, and xv. 8; Acts ix. 1-9.

The Main Difficulties

(1) The order of Nos. 1 and 2 chronologically. (See p. 96 for suggested solution.)

(2) Nos. 1, 2, and 4 are not recorded by S. Paul—but his account never claims to be exhaustive, it deals only with a chain of teaching which he had received by tradition.

(3) No. 5—the first appearance in the upper room. The accounts of S. Luke and S. John differ considerably, but are not really inconsistent. It is more difficult to reconcile with them S. Mark xvi. 14, but possibly this last passage is summarising the events of the forty days.

(4) No. 8. S. Matthew alone mentions the mountain in Galilee; S. Paul alone the five hundred. These may or may not be different aspects of the same event.

(5) No. 9 is not mentioned except by S. Paul, but Gal. i. 19 tells of a special interview with S. James, when he might have received this information.

(6) No. 10. The accounts are rather confusing. It is difficult to see in S. Luke, as also in S. Mark, where the account begins. Possibly each of these is a summary of the events of the forty days. We know that the last verses of S. Mark are of the nature of a supplement.

PART III: THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH

CHAPTER VI

THE WITNESS OF CHRISTIAN INSTITUTIONS

A. Introduction—

I. The Dispensation of the Holy Spirit.
II. The Church's Witness to the Resurrection.
III. Twofold witness of the Church.

B. Christian Institutions as Links with the Past.

(*a*) The Ministry; (*b*) the Sacraments; (*c*) the Christian Year. These links peculiarly sound and strong.

C. Christian Institutions as Witnesses to Facts.

1. Facts of *human nature*—needs, tendencies, aspirations, which they meet as no other religion has done.
2. Facts or *events of history* and momentous convictions held concerning these facts through the many vicissitudes of nineteen centuries.

A. Introduction

I. **The Dispensation of the Holy Spirit.**—We have now reached the third division of our subject, a division which corresponds to the third paragraph of the Christian Creed. The keynote of that paragraph is struck in its opening words, 'I believe in the Holy Ghost.' And it is the thought of this supernatural influence at work in

the world which binds together the apparently heterogeneous clauses of that final section of the Creed. We Christians point to certain historical facts and tendencies which mark the world's history since the Day of Pentecost as subject to a kind of influence and control not visible before. This influence, which is manifested in the moral, intellectual, and æsthetic spheres alike, and indeed in every department of human life, we believe to have emanated from the Christian Church. And if we are asked what adequate *cause* can be adduced to account for the really stupendous *effect* of the Church's influence upon the conditions, the practices, and the ideals of mankind, we can only point to our Lord's words about the Paraclete. Christ is represented as promising to His followers a Divine Guide and Strengthener, mysteriously identical with Himself and at the same time distinct from Him, One who should quicken their natural capacities, and enable them to rise and to draw others to heights otherwise impossible. The Spirit is to lead them into all truth, to reveal Christ, to carry on His work when He is gone. Nay, in the Spirit's coming He is Himself to come, and to be with them 'all the days, even unto the end of the world.' And in view of this new dispensation it is even 'expedient' for them that the Master's visible presence should be removed.

The guidance of the Early Church in the perplexing and intricate controversies amid which her theology was systematised, is not least among the evidences of this supernatural agency. It is no small thing that out of the midst of human frailty, prejudice, and passion should have emerged a body of teaching at once so true to the mind of Scripture, and so enduringly capable of reinterpretation to the different races and generations of mankind; so satisfactory to the calm judgment of philosophers and to the practical instinct of peasant and plain man in each age. And that environment of human frailty, prejudice, and passion, which has certainly left its mark on every century of Church history, serves to bring out a further testimony to the indwelling of the promised Spirit, in that it forms a background to a marvellous series of reformations and rejuvenescences in

a seemingly decadent Church. Again and again we have presented to us the spectacle of a Church apparently dying of corruption, and again and again the invincible principle of life and youth comes to the rescue from within—springing up often from unexpected quarters and in most unlooked-for ways.

This Church, which has so often renewed her youth, which has repeatedly made our old world young again —how came she by this Divine principle of life? Her own claim is that she had her origin in a Resurrection—the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And so it is from the Resurrection—the subject of the previous chapter—that we still make our start.

II. **The Church's Witness to the Resurrection.**—The history of the Apostolic Church and of the Christian centuries constitutes a mighty confirmation of the essential fact of the Resurrection. The early Church built its apologetics, and, in a sense, its faith on the Resurrection; and the Church believes to-day, as always, that the Lord Jesus rose on the third day according to the Scriptures, rose to die no more, and is with His followers 'all the days even unto the end of the world.' This does not of course itself establish the fact of the Resurrection, much less any particular theory of the Resurrection; but historic Christianity is an *effect* which demands a *cause*, and to no cause can it be so reasonably referred as to that which the early Church accepted as an unquestionable fact, that the Christ, who lived in Galilee and died on Calvary, still lives as He promised, abiding with and working in His kingdom upon earth.

Christ's living work, if we may trust the Christian consciousness of so many centuries, did not end in the year of the Crucifixion. As the Third Gospel describes (Acts i. 1) what 'Jesus *began* both to do and to teach until the day on which He was taken up' so the Acts narrates the beginning of His mightier deeds and teachings after the Ascension; and the subsequent history of the Church is the continuation of this narrative. *The Witness of the Church is thus closely linked to that of the New Testament.*

It is the fact of the Church as a whole in its continued

existence and growth and manifold influences upon the world that forms in some ways the most appealing argument for the reality of the Resurrection, and also for the Divinity of Christ and the truth of the revelation connected with His name.

III. In order to appreciate the force of this argument we may consider in detail:—

The twofold witness of the Church.—The testimony afforded by those persistent features of her life, which we commonly designate 'Institutions,' and the further testimony of her living energy as it has influenced the development of men and nations. This consideration will occupy the remainder of our space.

The latter group of evidences we shall consider in the chapter which follows. For the present we will confine our attention to the subject of Christian Institutions.

B. Christian Institutions as Links with the Past

Institutions have a Double Witness.—Such representative institutions of the Christian Church as the *Ministry*, the *Sacraments*, and the cycle of commemorations known as the '*Christian Year*' have a place of their own in any complete scheme of evidences.

To the believer, indeed, in whose experience they are veritable means of grace, they form parts of a greater sacramental system that can only be rightly comprehended from within; they bear witness to a living Christ and an ever-present Holy Spirit, by whose means he is brought into direct communion with the Eternal Father. But it is not only to such that they make their appeal. People who can see nothing supernatural in the Sacraments may yet be able to appreciate to a considerable extent the evidential value of Christian institutions, and that in two aspects: (1) as *links* connecting us with the age of the Apostles; (2) as bearing witness to *facts* of great moment.

All institutions, it may be said, bear witness to facts, either to facts of human nature—needs, aspirations, tendencies—or to facts of history—great events which have earned a conscious and deliberate commemoration

from their own and future generations; or, very commonly, to both, because human history and human nature stand in such close relation to one another that it would be surprising if various aspects of the latter did not find frequent outward expression in the former.

The great Christian institutions will be found to belong to this last class, bearing witness at once to prominent needs of human nature which they meet, and also to definite historical facts and events of the utmost importance for religion, which they commemorate.

But first let us consider these institutions in their simpler and more obvious aspect—as **links with the past.** This is a feature which has been largely lost sight of outside the Church. Students approaching Christianity from without, and many of the 'Reformed' bodies of Christians, have been apt to look upon Christian theology as an antiquarian study; the rediscovery of an interesting and beautiful theory of life, to be found by research in the ancient literature known as the 'New Testament.' There has been a tendency to ignore the fact of continuity and its consequences.

But in the ministry, the sacraments, and the Christian year (especially the first-named) we have really a most striking and valuable link with the first age of the Church and the times of the New Testament. The permanence and continuity of these institutions amid a constantly changing environment, through ages and circumstances as different from one another as was the Apostolic Age from the Mediæval, and the Mediæval from the present, is a very remarkable fact; and its significance is rather enhanced than diminished by the consideration that the various parts of the Church in different periods have pursued each its own line of development in minor matters.

(*a*) **The Apostolic Ministry.**—In common with the Jewish, and indeed with pagan priesthoods, the Christian ministry might be expected to represent a strongly conservative force and traditional influence. And as a matter of fact it has, from the earliest times, been regarded as the backbone of the Church's continuity.

S. Clement of Rome, the younger contemporary of the

Apostles, emphasises very strongly this aspect of the ministry. And *S. Irenaeus* also, in the following generation, finds in the historic Episcopate, with its unbroken succession from the Apostles, the guarantee of continuity both in doctrine and discipline. The Episcopate affords a visible and obligatory bond of association, and so a principle of continuity where there is no such continuity of race, language, or place. So the Apostolic Succession bridges over what would otherwise be chasms in the history. Thus, *e.g.*, in the history of the English Church such chasms would otherwise be found in the Parliamentarian Rule and the Restoration of the Monarchy; or further back, in the Reformation Revolt from Rome, or, still earlier, in the Norman Conquest. Similarly in the history of Europe, the general confusion that attended the break-up of the Roman Empire in the beginning of the Middle Ages; the enormous change in the political status of the Church involved in the accession to power of Constantine the Great; the chasm which we might have supposed would separate the age of the Apostles of Christ from the succeeding generation. And here perhaps it may be well to observe that this Episcopal Succession is no imaginary thing built up on elaborate doctrines of 'Apostolical Succession.' These latter have been controverted; but the fact of an unbroken episcopal succession is practically undisputed as regards the Roman communion and the great churches of the East, and has been triumphantly vindicated for the Anglican Church as a result of recent controversy.

Thus the bishops—Anglican, Roman, and Eastern—of to-day link us by a 'chain of hands' with the first days of the Church, with the commission recorded in S. John's Gospel (xx. 21-23) as given by Christ to the original members of His Church in the upper room at Jerusalem on the evening after His Resurrection.

(*b*) **The Sacraments.**—The two rites which have always taken a foremost place among the sacramental ordinances of the Church are Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. They also afford valuable evidence of the continuity of the Christian system. Of *Baptism* it is sufficient here to observe that it has maintained its hold, in the form laid

down in the last verses of S. Matthew, as the initiatory rite, through nineteen centuries. Of the *Holy Eucharist* the same may be said. In essentials and as far as we can judge, the Liturgy in general outline remains to-day the same in Eastern, Roman, and Anglican communions as it has been from the first. Like Baptism and all other historical rites, it has gradually assumed a more or less elaborate ceremonial clothing. But a comparison of our present Communion service, *e.g.*, with that in use before the Reformation, and still more with the glimpse offered by Justin Martyr (*Apol.* i. 65-67) of the Eucharist as celebrated in the second century, and of that again with the New Testament reference to its institution, will show that here too we have a real principle of permanence and continuity amid all the changes and vicissitudes of human life that have intervened.

Among sects in which the principle of continuity is ignored or unappreciated, there has been naturally a discarding of historic liturgical forms, but very seldom an entire rejection of the barest outlines as gathered from the New Testament, as the 'Breaking of Bread' and sharing of the Cup.

(*c*) **The Christian Year.**—We now come to the Christian year. This is not a controversial subject like the Apostolic Succession or the Sacraments, but simply a fact. A new and revolutionary framework for the year has been shaped out of material supplied by the leading facts of the New Testament narrative.

The Nativity, Baptism (at 'Epiphany'), Forty Days' Fast, Crucifixion, Death and Burial, Rising again and Ascension to heaven of Christ, the outpouring of the Spirit by the Ascended Christ, are events commemorated all over the Christian world, in a way which brings the successive stages in Christ's ministry into the closest connection with the common life of men. Some of these commemorations apparently originated at a later date than others; some (like Christmas, and apparently Ascension Day) were kept on the days now reserved for them from the first, in parts of the Church, but only obtained universal recognition after some three or four centuries of partial or diverse observance. The observance of **Friday** as the

memorial day of the Lord's Crucifixion is of extremely early origin, but the Lord's Day and Easter are the most important for our purpose. The special observance of the first day of the week as **the Lord's Day** (cf. Rev. i. 10) can be traced back without difficulty to New Testament times—nay, with great probability to the Octave of the Resurrection itself (S. John xx. 26). The observance of **Easter** as an annual commemoration of the same fact is bound up with that of the first day of the week—much as Good Friday and ordinary Fridays are linked together—and the importance which was attached to it in the Church of the second generation after the Apostles may be judged from the bitterness of the Paschal controversies of the second century.

The observance of **Pentecost** is also probably of Apostolic origin. In early times, even more emphatically than to-day, the whole period of fifty days from Easter to Pentecost was kept as a continuous festival. Thus a canon of the Council of Nicæa (325) forbids kneeling at prayers during these days. This may account for the obscurity that attends the early observance of Ascension Day as a separate festival. But Pentecost was at once the closing day of the great festival season, and also the 'birthday' of the Christian Church, in virtue of the momentous event recorded in the second chapter of the Acts. Its observance is abundantly attested as early as the second century; and it is perhaps not fanciful to infer from S. Paul's familiar reference to Pentecost (1 Cor. xvi. 8) when speaking to Gentile Christians, that it had already, in A.D. 56, found its way into the recognised cycle of Christian commemorations. It would be strange indeed if it were not so, under the Dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

Christmas, though in our days the most popular of festivals, holds a subsidiary place among links with the past, because, although we are told by S. Chrysostom that it was kept from the first in the West, it was not until about the fourth century A.D. that December 25 obtained universal recognition as the day for commemorating the Lord's Nativity. The events represented by the Lord's Day, Easter Day, and Whitsunday

all happened in the Apostles' lifetime and experience, and were fresh in their memory when they began their preaching. So far off an event as the Nativity, and one outside the first cycle of oral teaching (from the 'baptism of John' to the Ascension, cf. Acts i. 22, and the scope of the Second Gospel), would naturally fail, at first, of commemoration on any special day in the year. But, after all, very little depends on the fixing of the actual day of the Nativity; and we have abundant evidence that the event itself—which in a sense has never been denied, though its miraculous character has (see Appendix A)—was celebrated fully as early as we should have expected to be the case.

These links peculiarly strong and sound.—So far we have been considering Christian institutions as links with the past. The value of such a chain of evidence is in proportion (*a*) to the soundness of its links all along; (*b*) in particular to the stability of the connection established by the last link; (*c*) to the nature of that to which the last link unites us. In each of these respects our evidence is particularly good. Few, if any, historical commemorations now surviving can point to so remote an origin as can our Christian institutions. And few, if any, can be traced so clearly throughout all the centuries of their observance.

There is always, moreover, a special strain upon the last link of such a chain; and the question arises, Is that last link sound in this particular case? All the unbroken continuity is meaningless and useless if it breaks down just short of the time of the Apostles themselves.

Here comes in the importance of the Episcopal Succession on which sub-Apostolic writers laid so much stress. Bishop Lightfoot and others have made it abundantly clear that there is no breach of continuity between the age of the Apostles and that which followed it. And the last link of all—or rather the junction of the last link with that to which the whole chain is attached—finds its place in the New Testament; and therein we find certainly a more complete and satisfactory body of literary evidence for those facts on which the Christian system is based than for any analogous facts of ancient

history as generally accepted. To this point we shall have to refer again in our next section (see below, p. 116).

C. Christian Institutions bear witness to facts

Christian institutions have an evidential value beyond that of bridging over in a palpable way the chasm which would otherwise separate us from the Apostolic age. They also bear witness, as we have said, to important *facts*—(*a*) to what may be called *facts of human nature* and (*b*) to *facts of history*.

1. *Witness to Facts of Human Nature*

Natural theology teaches us (see above, p. 12 *sqq.*) that human nature is marked by certain needs, tendencies, aspirations, which have striven in all ages and among all races to attain fulfilment and satisfaction in the exercises of religion.

Christianity claims to offer completely what no other system has offered but in part—a satisfaction of man's whole nature; it claims to correspond fully, when fully appropriated, with all the essential needs and possibilities of humanity.

Of course the truth of this claim can only be really tested by experience—from within—and even so not quite completely, seeing that it is an essential element of the Christian teaching that the climax of its benefits is to be reached beyond the grave. But a brief glance at its representative institutions regarded from this point of view may help to make clear in one or two points the grounds of its claim to satisfy human nature, to whose outstanding needs these institutions correspond.

(*a*) **The Ministry and Human Nature.**—One of the most elementary needs of man as an essentially social being, is that of a permanent and stable organisation—an element of continuity in his life, and of authority to direct and guide his life. This is perhaps especially the case in the religious sphere. The ideal social organism is one which supplies at once the maximum of stability and permanence with the maximum also of adaptability

to the necessities and demands of successive ages. The Christian organism may claim to fulfil these conditions to a degree not attained elsewhere. Its threefold ministry has persisted throughout a period in which practically every analogous institution has died away. It gathers up into itself, in theory at least, traits of every true type of government: the *monarchical*, in the Episcopate (and in a higher and more spiritual sense in the acknowledged headship of Christ to His Church), and the doctrine that the call to the ministry and the grace of orders comes from God; the *aristocratic*, in its careful selection of its candidates for the ministry; the *democratic*, in the part originally played by the laity in the selection of its spiritual officers. The ministry is at once the expression of the divine rule and guidance, over the Body, and the Body's own organ for the exhibition of its manifold receptive and active energies. This twofold aspect of the ministry has been well set forth by the late Dr. Moberly, and is indeed implied in S. Paul's language about the Body and its members.

That it has not wholly succeeded in fulfilling these functions is a point which it shares with every institution on which human frailty has left its mark. But its marvellous persistence bespeaks a very considerable degree of success, and it is difficult to conceive of any other organisation equally complex and developed living and thriving so constantly side by side with the most varied forms of government; alike in the sphere of a Roman Empire, whose enormous forces it was able in its tender age to defy and eventually to subdue, and among the lowest and most degraded of savages.

(*b*) **Sacramentalism and Human Nature.** — We have already alluded to the sacramental system of the Church as distinguishing it from the greatest of its rivals, by supplying a supernatural stimulus and power side by side with ideals otherwise unattainable (see p. 78). We have referred to it also as supplying to the believer surest and most direct evidence of the abiding presence of Christ. It will be convenient here to add a few words on the principle of sacramentalism, and its relation to the needs of human nature.

Man is a composite being, partly material, partly spiritual, and any theory or plan of religion which ignores and leaves out either side of his nature is, so far, unreal or inadequate. The whole man, body and spirit, is one, and without both of these elements man, as we know him, is not complete. Any religion that is to be really satisfactory must therefore make its appeal to the whole man. This principle was recognised in pre-Christian religions — it is involved, indeed, in the employment of any outward acts or gestures for religious purposes. But it finds perhaps its clearest and most systematic expression in the Old Testament. The characteristic priestly teaching is that God must be approached with punctilious seemliness and purity of body, and worshipped through the medium of appointed material instruments, under definitely regulated conditions of time and place. The prophetic teaching supplements this. God is a spiritual being, and to be spiritually worshipped, and no degree of ceremonial correctness can make up for lack of righteousness, purity, and spirituality of heart. Thus the twofold character of human nature and human worship receives recognition. The supremacy of spirit is safeguarded, while the bodily nature is welcomed into the sphere of religion, and, on the analogy of our ordinary mental experience, is made the avenue through which the spiritual nature receives impressions.

In Christianity this comprehensive principle reaches its climax. The seal is set upon it by the Incarnation of the Divine Word, in which central fact the Church finds the spring of all sacramental grace. The union of heaven and earth, of the inward and the outward, of the spiritual and invisible, and the visible and material, has its consummation in the God-Man. Therein matter is consecrated to a higher destiny, and the bodily nature of man has warrant of a glorious future.

By sacramentalism, then, is meant the mediation of the spiritual and invisible through the channel of the visible and material, which finds its basis in the Incarnation, and its expression in the sacramental ordinances of the Church—which are as it were the outflowings of the Incarnation. The system of the Church is steeped in

sacramentalism, and indeed must be so if it is to satisfy the religious needs of the whole man, or to give his spiritual nature, bound up and blended as it is with the bodily, any objective assurance of Divine assistance. We need not so much a vague and diffused idea that there is a good God Who cares for us and would like to help us, as a guarantee that if we fulfil certain conditions here and now we can be sure to receive definite help.

All the Church's ordinances, whereby she claims to bring man by means in part external and visible into touch with the Incarnate Saviour, are thus sacramental —in this sense, *e.g.*, **Absolution** and **Ordination** are undoubtedly sacramental—but the principle is focussed and centralised in the two greatest sacramental ordinances which are regarded as the means of our union with the Incarnate Saviour—viz., the 'ingrafting' of **Baptism**, and the nutriment and growth that are the work of the **Holy Eucharist.**

The sacrament of **Baptism** claims not only to fulfil the functions of an initiatory rite such as marks the entrance of new members into any august society; but further, to counteract (or supply the means of counteracting) that decadent tendency which undoubtedly manifests itself in the moral nature almost as soon as a child becomes conscious of itself. It claims to remove the entail of corruption which is the natural correlative of the continuity and solidarity of a tainted race. It claims to supply, in the new and living relation to Christ which it inaugurates, a means of entry into that intimate communion with the Divine for which man in his religious moods has always longed and hoped.

Of **the Holy Eucharist** it is impossible to speak adequately here. It must suffice to observe that it carries on the work of Baptism. Human nature needs not only initial help, but also continual support and repair; and so the sacrament of New Birth, opening communion, is followed by the sacrament of Sustenance and renewed communion.

The sacrifices of paganism, as those of Judaism, rightly recognise this principle. And the Christian Church, while it holds that Christ—in contrast to the recurring

sacrifices of Judaism—fulfilled, once for all, all the necessities and demands implied in sacrifice, still finds it necessary to apply over and over again to frail humanity, the results of that great unique act.

2. *Institutions as Historical Evidences*

Institutions, while bearing witness to facts or needs of human nature, not seldom bear record at the same time to facts of history. A good instance of this may be seen in the three great Hebrew festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. There are many ways, no doubt, in which these festivals were related to the religious needs of those for whom they were ordained; but one conspicuous feature is the way in which they meet man's instinctive desire to interweave religious associations with the harvest in its different stages. These three feasts seem to have been originally harvest-festivals, celebrating respectively the beginning and end of the corn-harvest and the ingathering of the fruits. As such they bear witness to a notable fact in the history of the Hebrew people, viz.: that before these festivals assumed their historic shape, the tribes had advanced beyond the nomad stage of merely pastoral life, to the stage of civilisation represented by the cultivation of the land. But on the top of this connection with natural religion was superimposed in each case (but most notably in the case of the Passover), a fresh commemorative meaning, and they became memorials to the nation of definite historical events in the development of revealed religion.

Christian Institutions bear witness to facts of history.—The greater institutions of the Christian Church afford very strong evidence for the historical character of the facts recorded in the New Testament. The strength of this evidence is more accurately appreciated when the relation of Christianity to Judaism is realised. When we remember that Christ and His Apostles accepted the Old Testament Scriptures as authoritative and inspired, and regarded Christ's teaching as the fulfilment rather than the abolition of the Law, we shall realise the significance

of certain striking departures from the Old Testament or the traditional system of the Jewish Church of their day, and acknowledge that an adequate reason for such innovations could only be found in very strong convictions.

(*a*) **The Ministry.**—Of the ministry as the backbone of the Church's continuity we have already spoken, and of its importance as a witness to Christ's original commission to the first disciples. The unbroken character of this chain of witnesses is sufficiently attested by writers from S. Clement of Rome onwards. What we would draw attention to here is simply the importance of the *breach* of continuity with the *Jewish* ministry.

Breach of continuity with Jewish Priesthood.—The Christian ministry in New Testament times has been the subject of much discussion, and offers many interesting problems for solution. It was not until the generation after the Apostles, perhaps, that it became everywhere stereotyped in its present form. But two things are clear: (1) That the ultimate authority was regarded as residing in the Apostolic College, and that, under their leading, subordinate local officers were appointed ('Elders' = Presbyters—sometimes called Episcopi or 'Bishops'—and Deacons); while there is one instance at least in S. James at Jerusalem of a 'Bishop' in the modern sense of the word. (2) That though some of the features of the Christian ministry were probably derived from Judaism—*e.g.*, the title 'Elder'—and though we find the Apostles in the early days frequenting the Temple at Jerusalem and the synagogues in the various cities which they visited, there is *no real continuity between the Christian and Jewish Priesthood.* The Christian ministry is in fact a striking witness to the conviction of the Primitive Church that a fresh start had been made alike in the inward and the outward things of religion, in Jesus Christ, Whom the New Testament Christians believed (Heb. vii. esp. 14) to have inherited a higher priesthood which superseded the Aaronic, and from Whom, according to the continuous doctrine of the Church, springs as from a fountain-head whatever of priestly power or priestly function is possessed by His ordained ministers in the Apostolic Succession. The

significance of this breach with the venerable priestly tradition of Judaism becomes all the more apparent when we remember that 'a great multitude of the (Aaronic) priests' were among the early converts to the Christian faith (Acts vi. 7).

(*b*) **The Sacraments: Baptism supersedes Circumcision.**—Christian baptism has analogies in most religious systems, answering as it does to the practically universal consciousness of the need of purification. But its historical lineage lies in Judaism; it was a modification of the current Jewish custom of baptizing all converts from the Gentile world. Two points are worthy of notice in this matter: (*a*) Baptism entirely ousts and takes the place of circumcision as the initiatory rite. The full significance of this change will be observed when it is remembered that circumcision was regarded by all Jews, and by the Apostles among the number, as a divinely appointed rite of the greatest antiquity, pre-Mosaic in its origin; and that the prime mover in its supersession by Christian baptism was S. Paul, a Pharisee of the Pharisees.

Baptism involves the Christian Doctrine of God.—(*β*) Baptism in the Threefold Name would have involved blasphemy for a Jew, unless he accepted the position of the Divinity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. And so the baptismal formula (which was indeed most probably the nucleus round which the creed of baptism grew up) supplies evidence for the original belief in the Divinity of Christ, and carries with it by implication, from an age prior to the great theological controversies, all that is involved in the Christian doctrine of God, the Trinity-in-Unity.

The Eucharist witnesses to facts.—The Holy Eucharist links us first of all, as we have noticed, with the scene in the upper room on the night before Christ's Crucifixion. On that occasion He instituted a memorial of His coming death, and gave to His disciples what He Himself called His own Body and Blood; and in that sense the Holy Eucharist has been celebrated ever since. We are not concerned at this point to discuss or elaborate the inner meaning of this rite; but it will be necessary

for our purpose to consider it from two points of view: (i) its relation to Judaism and the Jewish Passover, where it will be found to exhibit more striking innovations even than baptism; (ii) in its effect upon the religious world. We shall then be able to appreciate better its evidential value, as testifying not merely to an event, but to a momentous belief.

(i) **The Eucharist and the Passover: startling innovations.**—The institution of this rite took place in close connection with the ceremony of the Jewish Passover. What that connection exactly was, has been disputed; whether it was at the actual Paschal meal, or at an earlier meal substituted by Christ on that occasion. But be that as it may, it has a close connection with the Passover, and all who first partook of it were brought up in the principles of Judaism. How great, then, is the significance of the change involved in substituting a memorial of one about to die a criminal's death for the divinely appointed memorial of Jehovah's redemption of His people from Egypt—that best remembered and most honoured of the deliverances treasured up in Jewish hearts?

Secondly, how strange it is to find in a ceremony of Jewish origin such an apparently flat contradiction of the Levitical law as is implied in the words, 'This is My Blood,' 'Drink ye all of this.' (Cf. Lev. xvii. 10-14.)

And not only is there a command to drink the 'Blood' (which is called 'Blood of the New Covenant,' ranging it by the side of, or rather above, the august ceremonies by which Israel was bound to the Lord by Moses at the foot of Sinai), but the admittedly Divine attribute (cf. S. Mark ii. 7) of the remission of sins is connected with this 'Blood.' These startlingly revolutionary elements point to a momentous conviction on the part of those who carried on the rite—a conviction that the fact and event which they here commemorated, 'the Lord's death,' was not only real but of the highest importance, so as to override the most precious and august and divinely attested traditions of the Hebrew race.

The Eucharist implies the Resurrection.—One further remark may be made before we pass on to consider the

effect of the Holy Eucharist upon the religious world. It is this. The Holy Eucharist is in a special way an evidence of the positive belief in the Resurrection and Triumph of Christ. Not so much, we would say, in the memorial of the Resurrection and Ascension that all the early liturgies contained (dating perhaps from the Apostolic or sub-Apostolic days of unwritten liturgical forms), but in that the central and certainly most obvious object of its commemoration is the death of Christ; if therefore Christ were not risen—if, that is, His death were the last thing to be recorded of Him, and His lifework a failure—the Apostles proceeded to celebrate with regularity and fervour, and handed down most carefully to their successors, a memorial of the extinction of their highest hopes, of their own utter confusion!

(ii) **Effect of the Eucharist upon the religious world.**—The effect of the Holy Eucharist which we desire to emphasise is one closely associated with an interesting fact in the religious history of civilised man. The fact is this, that the establishment of this Christian rite as a religious institution coincides everywhere with the disappearances of bloody sacrifices. These sacrifices, as has often been pointed out, have been the most universal phenomenon of religion in all times and places. At the time of our Lord's Nativity, *e.g.*, there can be little doubt that they were among the most regular and familiar sights in every country of the world; but most conspicuously where religion had reached its highest development. In the Jewish religion, which admittedly provided the loftiest moral and spiritual teachings, these sacrifices attained the fullest degree of systematic elaboration.

Within some one hundred and twenty years of the birth of Christ, the pagan Roman governor Pliny complains that the shrines in his province of Bithynia are deserted and the sacrificial victims cannot find purchasers. This change of feeling he rightly attributes to Christian influence. And it is a specimen of what has occurred wherever Christianity has gained a footing.

Perhaps it would be too much to describe this as the effect of the Memorial Sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist. But it is undoubtedly true that the historic fact which

the rite commemorates, and to which it witnesses, is responsible for this great change. That fact is the Sacrifice of Christ, in which His followers saw the perfect and summarising fulfilment of what the sacrificial system of the ancient world vainly strove to fulfil.

How far the Christian rite does satisfy those universal cravings, of which the august and impressive institution of sacrifice was the reflection, is a question to which the devout and intelligent communicant alone can give an answer. But though his answer might not be accepted by the average man, there remains the testimony of history, which shows at least this, that the progress in acceptance of the Christian sacrifice corresponds, *pari passu*, with the vanishing away of that time-honoured, universally practised rite, which might have been expected to defy expulsion, if only in virtue of the way in which it had everywhere intertwined itself with all the more solemn associations of man's domestic, social, political, and religious life.

(*c*) **The Christian Year.**—The Christian year also, especially in its features of *Easter* and *Sunday*, bears witness to historic facts, and through them to momentous beliefs; and here again we shall find that the evidence becomes more telling when we consider the innovations upon Judaism involved in this system, and the early date at which these innovations appear to have been introduced.

Sunday and Easter witness to the Resurrection.—There can be no practical doubt that observance of the Lord's Day week by week and of the Easter festival year by year began in the very first days of the Church, and has continued without a break ever since. They testify in the strongest possible way to the contemporary belief in the reality of Christ's Resurrection.

The substitution in a Church which sprang from Jewish soil of the first for the seventh day of the week, as a day of special religious observance, of Easter for the Passover feast, of Whitsuntide for Pentecost, is a fact of great significance, whether we hold that it was a gradual process or effected by unrecorded Apostolic decree.

S. Ignatius, in a well-known passage, written *c.* A.D. 110,

already hints at the significance of the change, contrasting Christianity under the phrase 'Lord's Day observance' with Judaism represented by the word 'Sabbatising.'

Summary.—When it is remembered how many have been the vicissitudes through which the Church has passed, how diverse in racial characteristics, in political circumstances, and in degrees of civilisation have been the peoples whom she has successively embraced and absorbed; when we consider how strong and constant throughout have been the convictions represented by her great institutions; the spectacle of this striking persistence of beliefs amid constantly changing surroundings cannot fail to be deeply impressive.

But these institutions and what they stand for are after all only outstanding features of the Church herself. The whole fabric of the Church and Christianity is a fact of undeniable greatness and significance, an effect which demands an adequate cause. What is it that has been able to produce such a new start in the religious history of mankind as Christianity represents? The Church herself, not only by her traditional teaching, but also by her institutions, points to the Resurrection and Ascension—to the Crucifixion—to the Incarnation of her Lord.

'The Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us.'

'I am come that they might have life. . . .'

'Lo! I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the world.'

In such statements as these she finds the secret of the mysterious power which she herself has exerted through the centuries.

CHAPTER VII

CHRISTIANITY A FACTOR IN HISTORY

I. External Progress of Christianity in the World.

II. Adaptability of Christianity.

III. Christianity and Civilisation—Individual, Social, International.

IV. Christianity and the Development of Knowledge.

Introduction.—We have now reached the last department of our subject. In a former chapter (see p. 54) it was pointed out that one of the tests of the true Revelation would be found in its practical results upon the world. It is just this aspect of Christianity which we are now to consider. Mahomedanism and Buddhism have each of them influenced, for good and ill, large sections of the human race. Christianity, in the period in which it has been at work in the world, has influenced probably an even larger number. What has been the nature of that influence? Has it tended clearly towards good or towards evil, towards progress or towards retrogression? Has it in any sense justified its claim to be the way of salvation not for this or that race only, not for this or that country only, but for all mankind?

Now it is not easy for any one to review history without a bias. Probably the ensuing sketch will seem to some one-sided or exaggerated. One can only endeavour to state the case as fairly as possible. We are confronted, however, by the involved and complex character of human history and the uncertainty and vagueness that consequently characterises historical deductions.

Yet we hope to show that Christianity as a factor in human history has justified its claim to be supernatural, and to be the religion for man. The Church that claims to be founded on the Resurrection of Christ and indwelt by the Holy Ghost, has brought new life to the human race, and moulded the development of individuals and nations in a manner of which the full marvellousness is only now beginning to be realised. The 'one Spirit' with His 'diversities of gifts' has interpreted the one message to the strangely various representatives of the great human family. The 'Spirit of Truth' has fostered the development of man's mental activities even outside the sphere of religion. This is the Christian's survey of His religious influence on human history. It remains to consider certain aspects of that influence one by one. And first, the external progress of Christianity in the world.

I. *External Progress of Christianity in the World*

The external progress of Christ's Church, beginning in the upper room at Jerusalem, and with the labours of a small group of provincial, uninfluential, and for the most part uneducated people, and reaching in our own day to the utmost bounds of the inhabited world, is of itself a striking witness to the supernatural character of Christianity, especially when taken in connection with the enormous difficulties of very various kinds which, all along its course, it has had to meet. It is not contended that the Church's progress has been uniformly successful through all the centuries, nor that it has been unattended by serious losses (as in the Rise of Islam) and serious drawbacks (such as the great heresies of the early centuries; the division between East and West; and the still further division of Reformation times). Nor is it contended that the whole of the world is Christian to-day; or that even every member of the so-called Christian nations acknowledges in practice or in theory the sovereignty of Christ. Such a result, however, does not seem to have been contemplated by the Church's Founder. What He contemplated was the preaching, that is the *offering*, of Christianity to all mankind (S. Matt. xxiv. 14).

Progress of the Church in the Apostolic Age.—The

Church on the dawn of the Day of Pentecost consisted at most of one hundred and twenty persons (Acts i. 15); at the end of that day its numbers are swelled by three thousand (Acts ii. 41). Then from time to time S. Luke pauses to review the Church's progress (*e.g.* Acts ii. 47). Acts vi. 7 marks a fresh increase after the appointment of the seven deacons. A further increase and spread of the Church is brought about by the dispersion of believers, due to the persecution following on the death of Stephen (Acts viii. 1 ff.). The latter part of the Acts —viz., chaps. xiii.-xxviii.—deals with S. Paul's missionary labours, and shows us the Church's advance right across the great peninsula of Asia Minor into the Balkan Peninsula and the chief cities of Greece, and exhibits to us a Church already existent at Rome at the time of S. Paul's arrival. S. Paul's own later epistles give us further hints. In one, *e.g.* (Phil. iv. 22), we find the household of Nero already impregnated with Christianity; in another (Rom. xv. 24) the Apostle speaks of an intended journey to Spain. This journey, or perhaps an even more extended one, is referred to by S. Clement of Rome (S. Paul's younger contemporary) when he says that before his death S. Paul had preached in the East and the West, and had reached *the furthest bounds of the West*.

Meanwhile there can be no doubt whatever that the Twelve Apostles after some considerable stay at Jerusalem had set out according to their Lord's definite command to evangelise the different nations of the known world (S. Matt. xxviii. 19).

For the actual scenes of their labours one has to rely on tradition (cf. Eusebius, iii. 21). But even if the tradition of S. Thomas' and S. Bartholomew's missions to India should be shown to be untrustworthy, two regions at any rate, not strictly contained in the Roman Empire, were evangelised by them: (1) the regions round the Black Sea, and (2) the great Eastern region of Mesopotamia and Parthia. S. Thomas, S. Thaddæus, S. Simon Zelotes, probably worked in these directions. And the results of their labours linger on to-day in the strange and romantic survival of the so-called 'Nestorian' Church of Assyria.

The Church at the end of the Second Century.—References in Tertullian make it clear that by his time Christianity had not only penetrated into every class of Roman society (*Apol.* xxxvii.), but had spread far beyond the frontiers of the empire and into districts not even traditionally touched by missions of the Apostles (*Adv. Judæos*, chap. vii.). He mentions the nations of North Africa, the whole of Spain, the different tribes of Gaul, the Dacians and Sarmatians, the Scythians, the Germans, and 'Britanorum inaccessa Romanis loca.'

The Church in the Fifth Century.—S. Augustine makes it clear that the churchmen of his day realised the world-wide mission of Christianity; and while he recognises diversity of use and of language in different parts of the Church these only serve to emphasise its all-embracing unity. He mentions African, Syrian, Greek, Hebrew, etc. as languages used in the Church (Aug. *Ep. to Januarius*).

The Church in the Middle Ages.—By the eleventh or twelfth century all Europe was practically Christian, at least in name. The conversion of the Teutonic conquerors of the Roman Empire had been partly the result of their absorption into the Christianised system of civilisation which they found established—a civilisation which conquered its conquerors, just as Greek culture had conquered the Roman conquerors; partly it was due to the devoted work of monastic missionaries like S. Boniface, the apostle of Germany, and again partly to the misguided zeal of military missionaries like S. Olaf, who converted much of Norway with the blade of his battle-axe.

Progress of the Church in Modern Times.—Of later missionary developments it is hardly necessary to speak. The discovery of the New World brought a new access, however narrow and fanatical, of missionary zeal, which has increased by leaps and bounds as the centuries have followed one another; and not only the West, but Asia, the scene of the stupendous missionary successes of the Nestorians in the seventh century, and of the noble zeal of S. Francis Xavier in the sixteenth, has been invaded with ever-increasing zeal and success. The same is true of Africa and of the Pacific Islands and Australasia. So

far indeed have things advanced, and so wonderfully accessible has the world become in these latter days, that a sane and studious body of men, comprising members of colleges in Europe and America, has deliberately set before itself the task of 'the evangelisation of the world in a single generation.'

II. *Adaptability of Christianity*

Humanity embraces such a diversity of types that some modern anthropologists have regarded it as scarcely conceivable that all the races which we now number among humans can have sprung originally from a single pair. This diversity may with greater probability be attributed to the peculiar circumstances and history of the individual nations and tribes; but whatever be its origin, the fact is quite indisputable.

One of the most remarkable features of Christianity is the way in which it adapts itself to every type of humanity, and succeeds in bringing out the best in each. Buddhism and Mahomedanism, the apparent rivals of Christianity, though the numbers of their adherents are very large, are comparatively confined in their own respective spheres of influence.

Christianity had its origin in a remote corner of the world among a people popularly regarded as 'haters of mankind.' It was developed from a religion belonging to a small, obscure, and politically unimportant people; a religion, moreover, like itself, exclusive in its claim, and therefore naturally unpopular, especially among those who were accustomed to the utmost elasticity in religious syncretism. The first Apostles of Christianity were all of this race, and mostly Galilean peasants, with the fisherman's vigour, sturdiness, and self-reliance no doubt, but in the eyes of their own countrymen (Acts iv. 14) 'unlearned and ignorant' persons. Yet their doctrine from the very first and throughout the centuries has been found capable of assimilation by every type of humanity, appealing, as we have seen, uniquely to each, and bringing out the best in each.

Adaptability shown in the Early Church.—In the Roman Empire its converts were at first members of the lower classes and slaves (1 Cor. i. 26). We must remember, however, that the slave population of the Roman Empire exhibited enormous variety of types, and included many persons far more intellectual and accomplished than their masters. And Christianity soon began to make itself felt not only among philosophers, lawyers, such as Lactantius, Socrates, Tertullian, and officials of the Empire, like Flavius Clemens. Tertullian's words in his *Apology*, § 37, include at least, among the strata of society influenced, military, political, and municipal professions. Outside the Roman Empire the Apostolic Age (cf. Euseb., iii. 1) probably saw the conversion of types belonging to each of the great families of the then known world.

The Middle Ages and Modern Times.—In the Middle Ages each century finds Christianity leavening new peoples. Not to speak of the Nestorian missions in China, which far exceeded in their effects any efforts of modern days, and left traces remaining at least as late as the seventeenth century; the great instances are the Teutonic and Celtic races of Northern Europe. In modern times the adaptability of Christianity has been marvellously exhibited now that so many more races have been touched by it: the aborigines of Australia, the many different tribes of Polynesia and of the Malay Archipelago, the enormous Bantu race of Africa, as well as the negroes of West Africa, the Indians of North and South America, the Eskimos of the Arctic regions, besides the longer-known races of India, China, and Japan. Missions, with all their failures and mistakes, have shown quite incontrovertibly the power of Christianity to appeal to the representatives of all these races, and to evoke a characteristic response from each. Mistaken methods have no doubt been applied in the past, and there has been an unwarrantable expectation of immediate results involving great intellectual development among the very backward races. But even so, the way in which Christianity has succeeded in individual instances in developing a high standard of culture, intellectual, moral, and æsthetic, among races whose

faculties had never been developed on these lines, is little short of miraculous. It is significant that the first printed literature in many of their languages has been the Bible.

The Secret of this Adaptability of Christianity.—(1) It *meets needs deep-rooted in humanity* and common to all. Chiefest of all those needs which are expressed in the primeval and universal institution of sacrifice are the yearning, conscious or unconscious, after God—the sense of guilt and estrangement and the sense of bondage to sin, the misery of life, and hopelessness at the prospect of death.

To meet all this we have in Christianity an unique presentation of the Fatherhood of God. We have means provided for restored communion, the possibility of spiritual freedom, and a sure and certain hope of life beyond the grave.

(2) Christianity *offers an ideal* in the character of Christ *universal in its range and capable* of real, if partial, *reproduction.*

(*a*) *Universal in its range* (Gal. iii. 28): 'There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female, ye are all one in Christ Jesus.' (Cf. 1 Cor. xii. 13.)

The words S. Paul uses of the Church as obliterating all conventional and accidental distinctions are true of the Church because they are true first of the character of Christ. Christ is not a man, but Man, and as such He combines in His own Person the characteristic virtues of all times of life, and of both sexes; and we may add of all walks of life and of all nations; for His character and teaching cannot be called Jewish, though the Old Testament is their starting-point.

(*b*) *Capable of Reproduction.*—The character of Christ is not transformed by its association with Divinity into something not human, but is found—and that on the testimony even of unbelievers—to be the ideal of humanity. From S. Paul onwards, thousands of His followers from every nation and condition of life have definitely and successfully made the *Imitatio Christi* their supreme aim. The production of the character of Christ

by each race as by each individual tends to supplement what has been done elsewhere.

None is capable by itself of reproducing the whole—and naturally, if the Church is meant to be co-extensive with the world of men. This is in accordance with the doctrine of the Body and the members, and finds perhaps its fullest expression in Eph. iv. 13, 'Till we *all* attain . . . unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.'

III. *Christianity and Civilisation*

Religion and Civilisation not identical.—To identify the progress of religion with the progress of civilisation is an obvious mistake. Religion has always been an important civilising influence, or, to put it otherwise, it has been at its best a congenial atmosphere for the development of civilisation. Yet of religion at its best it is true, as of morality to a certain extent, that it is independent of the accessories of civilisation.

Modern missions have taught us that individual souls from uncivilised races can be brought to a high degree of religious and moral development, and that without changing very much the external conditions of their life.

Religion as a Civilising Influence.—Secular life may for logical purposes be distinguished from religious life, but the life of man is really one, and his religion must influence his civil and secular life, as indeed the latter is bound to exercise some influence on the former.

Civilisation involves two elements: first the **individual**, secondly the **social**. Probably the social aspect comes first historically. Christianity deals impartially with both; it is not of itself definitely individualistic or socialistic. On the one hand its message is essentially a social one: the Church, the appointed home of salvation, is a society whose members are not, as in artificial societies, called members metaphorically, but are living parts of a living, spiritual organism. On the other hand Christianity safeguards, as no other system can, the rights and the worth of the individual.

(*a*) **Christianity and the Individual.**—The worth of individual personality and the rights of man as man are modern ideas, due largely to Christianity. The individual in early times was almost merged in society, as even now seems to be the case in savage races (hence tribal feuds, etc.). This was true of Greek civilisation where the city-state was everything, and of Roman civilisation, and there are traces of it in the Old Testament. The incidents, *e.g.*, connected with the execution of Achan and Korah, suggest that there was in early days no special sacredness about the individual. though a basis of this is visible in the strong prohibition of murder. Later on the doctrine of individual responsibility emerges clearly in Ezekiel. But the development of Old Testament morality was practically confined to the chosen people, and it is Christianity that has poured its treasures out upon the world. In Christianity we have the doctrine of **Universal Brotherhood**, and still more, the infinite worth of each soul as the object of Christ's Atonement—so that Philemon is exhorted to receive his runaway slave as a brother beloved. Slavery itself was not abolished till more than seventeen centuries after the Epistle to Philemon, and Christianity made no attempt to interfere in abrupt, revolutionary ways with the framework of society; but the social ordinances where they came in contact with the Church were infused with the principle of universal brotherhood, and such ordinances as were inconsistent with it began at once to decay.

Man, as man, wins a new value and a new reverence (1) because he is believed to have been created in the image of God, so that his personality is a reflection, however dim, of the personality of the Creator; and (2) because Christ died for him; Christian man still more, because Christ dwells in him by the Holy Spirit.

Even the theological controversies of the early centuries have contributed their share towards the modern recognition of the dignity of the individual: because the attention devoted to the study of the person of Christ, the God-Man, has emphasised the regard for human nature and personality. In general, the position of the

individual has been ameliorated with the progress of what we know as Western civilisation; and much at least of this amelioration is to be traced directly to the influence of Christianity. Consideration of the weak and oppressed, care of the sick and dying, abolition of inhuman customs like infanticide and gladiatorial combats, and finally, in due time, the abolition of slavery as an institution among civilised nations.

(*b*) **Christianity as a Social Force** in the world has transfigured family life, has been a preponderant factor in the development of the modern state, has profoundly affected international relations, while its influence on the character of individual nations has been most striking and beneficial.

(1) **Christianity and the Family.** The New Testament is full of the germs of a reformation of family life, as would be seen at once from a study of such passages as Eph. v. 21-vi. 9; Col. iii. 18-iv. 1; 1 S. Peter ii. 18-iii. 9. This transfiguration of family life has been effected principally by the Gospel of the true Fatherhood of God, which, though hinted at obscurely in pagan religions, and more clearly set out in the Old Testament, is only revealed in its fulness by the Lord Jesus. (Cf. The Lord's Prayer, and S. John xx. 17.)

The relation of the Father to the Family.—The head of the family in early ages had an authority absolutely despotic, typically represented by the Roman *patria-potestas*, but found in substance as early as *c.* 2285, B.C., in the *Code of Hammurabi*. As against this we have set out upon the background of the Heavenly Father's mercifulness and redeeming love, definite precepts such as those in Eph. vi. 4; Col. iii. 21.

Woman and Marriage.—Christ Himself taught in the strongest terms the sanctity of the marriage bond (S. Matt. v. 27-32, S. Mark x. 2-12), sweeping away even the Mosaic concessions to man's hardness of heart, and taking His stand (S. Mark. x. 6-9) upon the original divine intention of the Creator.

S. Paul, in Eph. v., especially vv. 25-31, lifts the subject to the highest possible level by connecting it

in thought with the union of Christ with His Church (the precepts to husbands come in Eph. v. 25-33, and Col. iii. 19). S. Peter gives similar exhortation (1 S. Peter iii. 7).

There can be no doubt that the Christian practice and theory were largely influenced also by our Lord's treatment of women as recorded in the Gospel: His tender dealings even with outcast women, His personal intimacy and intercourse with SS. Mary and Martha, and above all His relation to the Blessed Virgin; and we cannot doubt that even the exaggerated devotion paid in the course of ages to the earthly Mother of our Lord played an important part in the development of the respect and reverence for womanhood. It was largely responsible no doubt for the extravagances of mediæval chivalry; and the truth underlying it responsible for what was good and permanent in that idolising of ideal womanhood which finds such noble expression in Dante's *Vita Nuova*.

The relation of wives to husbands is dealt with in the corresponding passages in Ephesians, Colossians, and S. Peter, but it follows more or less as a corollary to that which we have been considering; and so, too, with the **relation of children to parents.**

But the majority of any considerable household in the Roman Empire would consist of **slaves**; the slave according to the human doctrine of Aristotle is an 'ἔμψυχον ὄργανον,' a living tool, and slaves among the Romans as among most nations *had no rights*. In the passages already quoted from the New Testament, the relation of master to slave is put upon an entirely new basis, both alike being servants of the Master in heaven to whom the human master is responsible for his treatment of his slaves, and for whose sake the slave is to serve his master faithfully and whole-heartedly, regardless of his character (see especially 1 S. Peter ii. 18-20). The general teaching mentioned above on universal brotherhood, that in Christ there can be neither bond nor free (Gal. iii. 28), and that a Christian is Christ's slave rather than man's (1 Cor. vii. 22-24), is not carried out to what we might think its logical conclusion. S. Paul is no social agitator to launch the Roman Empire

into the miseries of another servile war, and the advice given to the slave as to the freeman is 'Let each one abide in that calling wherein he was called' (1 Cor. vii. 24).

(2) **Christianity the preponderant factor in the development of the modern state.**—The Church has supplied for the modern state a model of unity, a model of organisation, an ideal of administration, and especially of the administration of justice.

The Church has been **a model of unity.**—This is well seen in the early history of England. The separate and for the most part contending states, traditionally known as the Heptarchy, were bound together before ever they came under a single rule by the friendly intercourse of ecclesiastics, whom political boundaries could not keep apart when they needed to meet in council.

The Church was also **a model of organisation.**—In some parts the early Church modelled itself upon the political organisation of the Roman Empire, *e.g.*, the ecclesiastical provinces and dioceses followed for the most part the political boundaries. In England there can be little doubt that the local areas of civil administration (civil parishes, etc.) were largely influenced by previous ecclesiastical boundaries, in fact by the parochial system initiated although not completed by Archbishop Theodore. Further, the Church synods, besides acting, as we have seen, as links of union between hostile kingdoms, formed at once the model and the germ of Parliaments.

Again the Church supplied **a model of administration and of justice.**—Though from the first Christianity enjoined submission to the civil magistrate, and even reverence and something like enthusiasm for the civil order (Rom. xiii. 1-7, and 1 S. Pet. ii. 13-17); and though the Lord Himself had rendered to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's, both in His submission to the Jewish law, and in allowing Himself to be judged and condemned by Pilate; yet Christianity always preached the supremacy of Divine Law, and the claims of an enlightened conscience. The result of this upon legislation in general, and upon the administration of justice in particular, has been to supply a constant stimulus to reform. There are abuses of this. In the reign *e.g.* of Justinian, with

all its greatness, we find a state-church despotism, with a great danger—and more than danger—of intolerance. Again abuses of this exaltation of Divine Law may be found among the great Popes of the Middle Ages: Gregory VII. (Hildebrand), 1073-1085, who first elaborated the Papal claims to be above all political rights; Boniface VIII., 1294-1303, who in his bull 'Unam Sanctam' reduced such claims to an absurdity. But '*abusus non tollit usum*'; and even in the times of greatest Papal pretension, the prestige of the Church's authority acted as a bulwark against lawless passion and irresponsible oppression of the weak.

(3) **Christianity and International Relations.**—International law may be said to have developed under the auspices of Christianity; and indeed it is only when Christianity has leavened political ideas that the constant tendency to more or less unscrupulous national aggrandisement can receive an effectual check. Long after the doctrine that Might is Right has been undermined in its relation to the individual, it continues to have its influence on the state. It is true that the leavening and combining influence of the Roman Empire did much to prepare the way for future international relations. It is true also that the philosophy of the Stoics played a considerable part in the development of cosmopolitan ideas. (How much later Stoicism owed to Christianity is uncertain.) But at the fall of the Western Empire in the beginning of the Middle Ages, the whole work had to be done anew; and there can be no doubt that it was the Christian Church, enriched of course with true principles gathered from the Empire and the Stoics, that took the leading part in this work. It may be objected that even to-day wars—and those between nominally Christian nations—have not ceased. On the other hand it is held by some that war for a sufficient cause may be a necessary part of the discipline of humanity in the present world. What is more to the point is the fact that *mere aggression* is increasingly disfavoured among the civilised nations of to-day. This no doubt is not entirely due to an ideal conception of international relations, but largely also to motives of self-interest; but that Christianity has

played a real part in its evolution is strongly suggested by the analogy of Christian influence upon savage races to-day. Where civilised Christianity meets backward peoples it endeavours to help and raise them, treating them with respect; where civilisation apart from Christianity comes in contact with them its first idea is exploitation.

But it is in the main by its effect on individual members of the family of nations that it may be expected to do most for the peace and happiness of the world. We have already spoken of the way in which Christianity adapts itself to the genius of the different peoples; it remains now to consider the part it has taken in the moulding of their character.

(4) **Christianity and National Character.**—(*a*) **In Europe: Mediæval times.**—National character has been described by Dean Church as a compound of the genius of a nation and its history. Religion has in all ages largely influenced it. This has been especially the case since the Christian era began. Thus, outside Christianity, Islam has moulded nations, though mostly in a uniform and rigid manner. It has consecrated, says Professor Freeman, despotism, polygamy, and slavery. The effect of Christianity has been different—it has resulted not in uniformity, but in a diversity of types; and the reason seems to be that it does not crush the national genius, but rather intensifies it, and directs it to the highest ends; while at the same time in virtue of its principle of proportion, it tends to supply the essential defects of the national character. Dean Church, after a careful survey of the chief races of Europe—Greek, Latin, and Teutonic—comes to the conclusion that Christianity has been not only the 'strongest element of salutary change' in the development of Western civilisation, but one indispensable to the action of others; and that its great influence has been rendered much more permanent and practical because it carries within it a self-correcting power. (*Gifts of Civilisation*, p. 293.)

(*b*) **The World in General.**—*Races and nations in general as affected by Christianity in the world of modern missionary effort.* Our evidence for the beneficial influence

of Christianity upon national character is not however confined to Europe, nor is its sphere to be found only in past history. Modern missions show the Church to-day as a civiliser of nations hitherto untouched or scarcely touched by civilising influences. There is plenty of testimony from laymen of great influence and experience to the reality of the Church's influence upon these backward races.[1]

Alike in S. Africa, in Melanesia, in New Guinea, among the Aborigines of Australia, and in S. America (Patagonia, etc.) we have clear evidence that the latent virtues of savages discovered in a degraded and most unlovely condition are being brought out by Christian teaching; and in the most scientifically administered missions, like that of the Universities to Central Africa, care is being taken not to Europeanise the natives, but to put them in the way of developing a Christian civilisation of their own.

There are enormous difficulties, due chiefly to the influx of degenerate or merely nominal Christians; to commercial self-seeking, not unnaturally causing confusion in the mind of a native; to political self-seeking, such as that which made the recent Christian persecution in China its pretext; and to such political complications as are involved, *e.g.*, in the present position of the French government as patron and protector of Roman Catholic Missions in the East.

Christian and Non-Christian Civilisation.—In contrast with the effect of definitely Christian civilisation we may observe how dangerous for native races contact with *mere* civilisation is apt to be. It involves of necessity the upset of old beliefs, customs, and traditions. It introduces new kinds of intemperance, new forms of immorality; it is marked by an extremely sparing recognition of the existence of any rights whatever in the original owners of the soil; and oppression too often results in massacre, and gradual or quick annihilation as, *e.g.*, in the case of North American Indians.

[1] Some of the evidence for China, South Africa, and India is collected into a pamphlet by the Rev. G. Longridge—*Official and Lay Witness to the Value of Foreign Missions.*

Civilisation introduced by Christianity tends to produce (1) **quietness and peace** instead of constant warfare, aggravated in some parts by cannibalism, in others by slave-raiding: (2) some degree of **freedom**, since even where there is no attempt to revolutionise entirely the social life of the tribe, the leaven of Christianity is sure to produce its effect: (3) **a high ideal of life** is inculcated, especially in the matter of unselfishness: (4) **industry** (cf. 2 Thess. iii. 10) is taught in various forms, and in many places sound technical instruction, thus making it possible for those whose means of livelihood had depended upon, and manner of life had been moulded by, warfare and the chase, to settle down to a peaceful life, and learn to develop the resources of the soil.

Summary.—To sum up: Christianity has been the nursing mother of our modern Western civilisation. That civilisation, it is perhaps not too much to say, has shown itself the chief factor in the destiny of the world. It embraces of course the whole of Europe except the Balkan Peninsula, which itself, though under Mahomedan rule, contains a very large Christian population. And if we include Asiatic Russia, which though not Western is Christian, and derives much of its civilisation from the West, it embraces also the northern half of Asia.

Western civilisation, again, is at least politically dominant over the millions of India. It has been spontaneously adopted by progressive Japan. It embraces nominally the whole of the New World and Australasia in its influence. The whole of South Africa owns its sway, and on the east side Central Africa up to the sources of the Nile, while it exercises a certain control over Egypt and the Soudan, again to the sources of the Nile; and various points of vantage on the western coast. In fact all the territory in the world, except the Turkish Empire (and that in a modified sense), the Chinese Empire, Persia, and certain districts of Central Asia, and the extreme north and south regions of the globe, seems at the present day to be under the rule or direction of that form of civilisation which owes so much of its best to the Christian Church.

IV. *Christianity and the Development of Knowledge*

Has the Church retarded intellectual progress?—It is not infrequently suggested that the Church has been in all ages an antagonist to the advance of knowledge. It is admitted that its influence may have been beneficial in some departments of human progress. Civilisation in its moral and social aspects may be deeply indebted to Christian ideas and sanctions. But there remains, it is urged, one department, and that a very important one, in which the Church has constantly restrained and retarded true and legitimate progress—viz., the intellectual and scientific.

It may be admitted at once that the *official representatives* of Christianity have more than once been found fighting against scientific progress, and that in important issues and at critical times. Every one will recall the names of Galileo in the seventeenth century, and Darwin in the nineteenth, and will remember how in each case, what proved afterwards to be a legitimate and fruitful advance, was opposed in the name of religion. It is unnecessary, perhaps, to point out that this persecution of scientists did not begin with the Christian Church: that Aristotle was threatened with punishment for impiety, and Anaxagoras arrayed before an Athenian Court for holding 'that the sun is an incandescent stone, larger than the Peloponnese.' It is not Christians alone who are liable to confuse essentials and non-essentials in their scheme of knowledge; and to think that because the former are true, any interference with the latter—such as must come with the advance of knowledge—is an impious assault upon Truth.

This is what took place in the case of Galileo and of Darwin. It was no essential principle of Christianity that barred their progress, but a misinterpretation or misunderstanding of the bearing of Christian principles on the part of well-meaning but short-sighted men, subject to all the limitations of their age and circumstances.

It is this latter contest, the 'Darwinian' or 'Evolution' controversy, that has embittered so many of our modern

scientists, and made them look upon theology as a hereditary foe. They forget the enormous influence that Christian thought has, through many centuries, exerted on their side. They forget that in the historic crises in which 'science' and 'theology' have been found at daggers drawn, the champions on *both* sides have been directly or indirectly actuated by impulses derived from Christianity. On that subject we shall have more to say. But first a word about the so-called 'conflict.'

Science and theology.—That science and Revelation do not necessarily conflict with or contradict one another, we attempted to show when we were dealing with the subject of 'Miracle and Natural Law' (pp. 44-52). The spheres of the two are, to a large extent, mutually exclusive; natural science being properly concerned with the investigation and classification of the phenomena of Nature, while theology finds its home in a spiritual realm at the back of material things. A conflict, when it ensues, is due either to 'bad science' or to 'bad theology.' And neither science nor theology ought to be asked to bear the blame of their champion's unworthiness. The scientist trespasses when in his zeal and enthusiasm he goes beyond 'description' and attempts to propound a speculative theory of the origin of the universe. The theologian is transgressing when he makes, not the *principles*, but the frequently figurative and definitely unscientific *language* of Holy Scripture a rigid test by which all the scientists' data are to be judged. Our Lord said: 'He maketh His sun to rise,' etc., but not the devoutest Christian of to-day would quote that text as condemnatory of Galileo's contention that the earth moves round the sun.

The Church's influence conservative.—Still, it cannot be denied that the Church has exercised a conservative influence upon the curiosity of her children. But a conservative influence is a steadying one, and in the case in question it has not been wholly bad. In an age rich in discoveries and rich in intellectual enthusiasm—like the Elizabethan age, or our own—it is of the greatest importance that the pioneers of progress should be forced to consider and reconsider their ground. And there can be little doubt that the Church's influence, while Europe was

in the making, guided the advance of thought again and again past misleading byways and blind alleys and over slippery places, and that we to-day are benefiting by that guidance.

Dogma.—It is commonly asserted that 'dogma fetters the intellect,' and that the Church's dogmatic system, centred in the creeds, was bound to bar the advance of knowledge. But the whole force of this criticism is derived from an assumption that the dogmas in question are *untrue*. It would be considered ridiculous to assert that the intellect is fettered and the progress of knowledge barred by such dogmas as the axioms of geometry or the accepted principles of physics. And if the Church's essential dogmas are true—and we hope that the preceding pages have shown the reasonableness of such a supposition—then they can form of themselves no real bar to the advance of knowledge. It is only some narrow and mistaken interpretation of them that can be responsible for such a result.

Christianity has given an impulse to intellectual progress.—But it is high time to glance at the other side, and to attempt to sketch, however slightly, the positive influence which Christianity has exerted on the side of intellectual progress.

The Jews and the Greeks.—The intellectual impulse which had been started in some degree by the meeting of Judaism and Greek philosophy at Alexandria in the three centuries before the Gospel found its way there, was but a feeble premonition of that which Christianity was to effect.

The Hebrews were not a missionary people, burning to impart to aliens the precious truths which they inherited from their fathers. Neither were they philosophical in their mode of thought. There is, as we have seen above (ch. iii. p. 67), no trace of a metaphysical power or tendency in the literature of their best age. It is not until the period of the Wisdom-literature (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes), embraced in the third and latest section of their Bible, that we find traces of an appreciation of purely philosophical problems. And these are

commonly thought to be due to Persian or Greek influence. This latter is clearly traceable in the Apocryphal Wisdom-books of 'Wisdom' and 'Ecclesiasticus,' which belong to the period when Alexander's conquests had flooded the East with Greek customs and ideas.

The naïvely unphilosophical character of Hebrew literature was in one sense a great strength. It resulted in an intense and unembarrassed attention to moral and religious subjects, and while it viewed everything concretely, it was based—thanks, surely, to that Divine guidance which we call 'inspiration'—on the profoundest theological foundations, and was developed on lines consistent with, and even leading up to, the highest philosophy. Yet in itself it was not explicitly philosophical.

Greek thought, on the other hand, was philosophical rather than religious. It produced, in the works of thinkers like Plato and Aristotle, some of the sublimest and most enduring products of the human mind. Yet it suffered from its theological limitations. The God of mere philosophy is not a God who can be worshipped and imitated. Pantheistic at best, Greek wisdom offered none of that stimulus, moral and intellectual, which springs from a sense of communion with a Personal God. For this stimulus is observable in the intellectual as well as in the moral and religious spheres, as may be seen by comparing the Hebrew 'Wisdom' with that of the Greek. There is, in the former, a fervent, personal interest in the objects and processes of Nature, which is directly connected with its theology. Nature is absorbingly interesting, not in itself, but because Jehovah is to be seen at work in it.

This kind of enthusiasm—the promise and earnest of our modern study of Nature—is absent even from the works of Aristotle, with all their monumental treasury of information and classification, and their depth of insight into principles, forestalling in many points the most recent discoveries.

Christianity and Greek thought.—The great impulse to the study of the universe may be said to date from the moment when this keenly intellectual stream of pagan

thought was met by the stream of Christianity. Here was a developed Judaism, with all the fervour and insight of the Old Testament conception of Nature, but without the limitations and prejudices of Judaism proper; and with a burning zeal to spread its truths and its spirit everywhere. The results of this union soon became visible, both in theology and in general science. In theology we have the great Christological controversies of the first four centuries, in which the keen instrument of Greek philosophical language enabled the Church to formulate philosophically in her creeds the central truths expressed incidentally and concretely in the Bible.

We have already hinted (p. 130 *sq.*) at the momentous effect that was produced upon the accepted view of 'persons' and 'personal rights' by the earnest and close attention then given to the problems connected with the 'Person of Christ.' And no doubt these controversies—purely speculative as they seem at first sight—had many other practical results bearing upon the development of society and civilisation.

But the sphere of general science is that with which we are more intimately concerned.

There can be no doubt whatever that with the coming of the Gospel there came also to a jaded world a new interest in all things human and in all the 'works of God.' This is observable in the early Christian literature, and especially, perhaps, in the Cappadocian fathers, S. Basil, S. Gregory of Nyssa, and S. Gregory Nazianzene; whose writings may be said to form almost a starting point for modern literature. Beyond, however, this general interest there soon began to develop a systematic philosophy of the universe on the lines of a sound theology. The cradle of the first Christian philosophy was Alexandria, and the '*First Principles*' of Origen mark an epoch in the history of religious thought in the West.

Scholastic Philosophy.—In the Middle Ages many of Aristotle's works were rediscovered, and gave an enormous impulse to systematic speculation on physical subjects. The reintroduction of these works into Europe was due indeed to the learned Arabs, whose countrymen had

reduced the whole of North Africa into subjection to Islam and had penetrated into Spain (cf. ch. iii. p. 59). But it must not be forgotten that the Arabs themselves had been taught by the Nestorian Christians of Mesopotamia, whose bishops had acted as viziers to some of the great caliphs of Baghdad.

This Christian philosophy on an Aristotelian basis, the system known as Mediæval Scholasticism, has its obvious failings and limitations from our modern point of view.

Its claim to include the whole field of knowledge in a simple, compact, and logical system bespeaks a noble aspiration and a generous confidence in its Biblical and Aristotelian basis. But it is vitiated, as we see in this experimental and inductive age, by its speculative and abstract character, its want of experimental contact with Nature herself. It was vitiated further, in spite of the rigid logic of its deductions, by the unscientific selection of its principles, accepted on authority, whether from the Bible or from the 'Philosopher,' and often applied in a manner that involves grave misinterpretation.

These faults have given Scholasticism a bad name in our day. And indeed their effect upon the intellectual progress of Europe in the later Middle Ages was undoubtedly disastrous. But we must not forget the other side. It was their very greatness that made them dangerous. That which led to the combined intellectual and religious revolt of the Renascence and the Reformation was the fact that these errors were potent, because associated with a system sublimely impressive and very largely true.

Dante.—Any one who would see the good side of Scholasticism should turn to the fascinating pages of Dante's *Divina Commedia*. He will then be able without prejudice to estimate the knowledge of Nature and interest in Nature characteristic of the best minds of the fourteenth century, and he will find it simply amazing. He will find that a disciple of S. Thomas Aquinas puts many a twentieth century student to shame by the tokens of diligent study, by the breadth of his view, and by the

vivid appreciation and insight which bespeak an alertness and a concentration of mind rarely found to-day.

Indeed Dante himself is a signal instance of the influence of Christianity upon intellectual progress. Dean Church, in his *Gifts of Civilisation*, institutes a comparison between the great poet of the Middle Ages and Dante's own *beau-ideal*, the pagan Vergil. And he shows how the acknowledged superiority of Dante is due in great measure to that changed point of view which Christianity introduced—a larger, more sympathetic, more just appreciation alike of Mankind and of Nature.

The Reformation and Modern Science.—But the rigidity of the scholastic system resulted in an extreme of conservatism. Its tendency to overstep in dogmatism the limits of its own knowledge, and to classify what there had as yet been no opportunity of investigating, was bound to stultify many of its glib pronouncements in the light of later discoveries. Knowledge had become prematurely stereotyped. Unelastic, over-developed, it could not reform itself; so the Reformation and Renascence came as a revolt from the tyranny of the Schoolmen. The 'New Learning,' permeated as was the Old with a spirit derived ultimately from the New Testament, opened the way for a freer and wider study of the world. Thoughts about Nature which the Franciscan Roger Bacon—overwhelmed as S. Francis himself had been with an enthusiastic love of the creature for Christ's sake—thoughts which he in the thirteenth century only whispered at his peril, were freely vented and developed by his better-known namesake at the beginning of the seventeenth. Francis Bacon, from whom the modern scientific method is proud to date its beginning, grounded his philosophy quite deliberately on a basis of theological presuppositions. Without the Christian religion Nature would have lost her interest for him as for many another by whom the torch has been handed on.

From Bacon's time onwards physical science has made great strides, and during the last half century its advance has been in almost 'geometrical progression.'

Conclusion.—It cannot, we think, be reasonably denied

that Christianity is prominent among the factors which have been responsible for this intellectual progress. In other departments, as, for instance, those of Art—painting and music—and Literature, the influence of religion is palpable. It is only the prejudices raised by recent controversy that can blind our eyes to its influence in the advance of Science.

It was in respect of the verities of religion primarily no doubt that the promise was given, 'He shall guide you into all truth.' But the Christian, recognising even more intensely than the secular philosopher that the universe is one, cannot but feel that a firmer and surer grasp of the central truths of theology must react upon all other knowledge; and so he sees in all attainment of truth the work of the Spirit whose office it is to reveal Him Who is the Life and Light of all that is, in Whom, as S. Paul says (Col. i. 17), all things consist. Sooner or later, through the mists of human error and prejudice, the truth will pierce; and in that radiance, even if it shines from an unexpected quarter, the Christian is prepared to recognise the fire of the Holy Spirit, 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Cor. iv. 6).

APPENDIX A

OUR LORD'S VIRGIN-BIRTH AND RECENT CRITICISM

The narrative of the Virgin-Birth, found in S. Matthew i. and ii., and S. Luke i. and ii., has been a special subject of recent attack by Professors Lobstein and Soltau; but their arguments have been met by anticipation, in all essentials, by the Dean of Westminster, Dr. Knowling, and Dr. Sanday. The reader is especially recommended to read the little book of the Dean of Westminster (*Some Thoughts on the Incarnation*, Longmans, 1s. 6d.).

We can only notice here a few of the more important points:—

(1) It is asked why the account of this miracle does not form part of the original cycle of the Apostles' preaching, as set forth in S. Mark. Clearly the Apostles (cf. Acts i. 22) regarded themselves as primarily commissioned to testify to those things of which they were *eye-witnesses*; and the earliest disciples received their first introduction to Christ after His baptism. But besides this, the event itself was so clearly liable to misinterpretation, so difficult to understand except in the light of what followed, that we cannot wonder if those to whom it was known kept it secret, and allowed the people of their generation to assume, as they evidently did, that Jesus was Joseph's son.

(2) The difference in standpoint between the two accounts is adduced. But is it not significant that these two accounts, so clearly independent, yet agreeing on the main subject, represent respectively the points of view of the only two persons who could have first-hand knowledge of the event? Neither of them claims to be derived from any specific source, yet S. Matthew certainly gives the narrative from S. Joseph's point of view, and S. Luke as certainly from that of S. Mary. S. Luke's narrative at any rate would not have been doubted on critical grounds apart from the prejudice against the miracle.

(3) Much has been made of the fact that S. Paul and S. John say nothing about the miraculous birth. The 'argument from silence' is confessedly a dangerous one. But surely a closer scrutiny reveals something more like corroboration than dissent. To put the matter summarily:—(*a*) The two Gospel narratives record a physical occurrence unique in human experience: the entrance into the human family of one born of a pure Virgin, with no human father, by the operation of the Holy Spirit of God. They do not interpret the event, or draw out its doctrinal significance: they simply narrate it without comment. (*b*) The two Apostles in question, on the other hand, give us in unmistakable terms the dogma of the assumption of our human nature, at a definite point in history, by the Eternal pre-existent Word or Son of God. They say nothing of the physical means by which this stupendous act was wrought. But is it not at least fitting that an act so unique should be consummated by means also unique?

APPENDIX B

THE BIBLE AND MODERN CRITICISM

Secularists often attack religion with the weapon of the 'Higher Criticism.' Scientific criticism, they say, has utterly discredited the Bible; and with the Bible falls Christianity. Any one, however, who will take the trouble to read a little book like Professor Kirkpatrick's *Divine Library of the Old Testament*, may see something of the *real* tendency and scope of the Higher Criticism.

Churchmen who remember that the Church, with her body of essential teaching, existed before the New Testament was written, are not likely to view the assaults of criticism with the alarm of those who recognise no Church tradition, and regard the Bible as ultimate. 'The Church to teach; the Bible to prove,' they will say. Still, because the Church, as witness and keeper of Holy Writ, has pledged herself to the inspiration of the Scriptures, it would be a calamity to us, as to others, if criticism had really 'discredited' the Bible. But in what sense is this true? In speaking of criticism we must be understood not to include the extreme flights of irresponsible conjecture, but only the more or less certified and established results. The Bible is a record of God's progressive revelation of Himself to man, from the first rude beginnings, necessitated by man's weakness, up to the full glory of the manifestation in Christ Jesus. That we believe is its purpose, and in that lies its permanent value. What criticism has taught us, with its analysis and classification of documents, is roughly this: that the treasure of Revelation has been given to us in 'earthen vessels': that inspiration does not destroy the personality of the inspired writer or compiler, nor lift him out of the limited circle of the secular knowledge of his own generation; nor does it secure a superhuman accuracy in matters of detail. The history, as history, may contain inaccuracies (such are strikingly few, even in the Old Testament), yet it may be true and adequate as a vehicle of theological and religious truth.

If anything is discredited by sound criticism, it is the mistaken theory of *verbal* inspiration, which allowed the Bible no kinship whatever with non-biblical literature, and refused to recognise in it a human element, as the medium through which God has spoken to man.

The difference between the New Testament and the Old must be borne in mind. As historical records, the New Testament books are without a parallel in ancient times. They were all, probably, written in the lifetime of the generation which had seen and heard what they record, and the MS. evidence is, in their case, uniquely satisfactory. This is important, because if we accept the New Testament account of Christ as historical, the general purport at least of the Old Testament becomes at once intelligible and credible.

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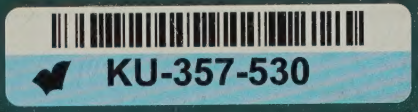
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